

#01

賀東招二

Illustrator  
なかじまゆか

あま

ぎ

甘城

A m a g i B r i l l i a n t P a r k

ブリリアント  
パーク



ファンタジア文庫



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To prevent you from escaping-

**Kanie Seiya**

A normal high school student...or is he?

What is with that musket?

**Sento Isuzu**

A girl who transferred into Seiya's class.



Please be the manager...

Welcome to  
Amagi Brilliant Park!

### Macaron

The mascot of Macaron's Musical Theatre. There's nobody inside him either.

### Moffle

The mascot of Moffle's Sweet House, and the fairy of sweets. There is certainly nobody inside him.

### Muse

Part of Aquario's cast, and the fairy of water

### Tiramie

The mascot of Tiramie's Flower Adventure, and the fairy of flowers. Once again, there's nobody (see above).

**Latifa Fleuranza**  
The princess of Maple Land, and the manager of Amaburi

...of Amagi Brilliant Park.





Attract  
**100,000**  
visitors into  
this failing  
theme park  
in two  
weeks!!

celebrating  
**30** years of  
service  
**LOPA!**  
**AMAGI**  
BRILLIANT PARK

!!  
**ng!**  
**30!**





MANAGER



DUBIOUS



DEPENDENT



SUBORDINATE



SUPERVISOR



NATURAL  
ENEMY



SWORN  
RIVAL





### Prologue

“Kanie-kun. This may be abrupt, but would you accompany me to an amusement park this Sunday?”

*I see. This certainly is abrupt.*

*Having a new transfer student threaten you with an antique musket after school is nothing short of ‘abrupt’.*

Kanie Seiya muttered as he struggled to regain his composure.

“An amusement park, you say?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“I can’t tell you just yet.”

“And...what’s with that musket?”

“It’s to prevent you from escaping.”

It was a beautiful white musket, embellished with gold stripes. The muzzle, however, was pressed onto Seiya’s forehead. Even though the weapon seemed heavy, the girl did not quiver one bit.

*The transfer student’s name was...Sento Isuzu, if memory serves. I vaguely recall some of my classmates talking about her.*

She had a slim figure, straight hair and relatively big eyes. She wore a cold and composed expression, coupled with a pair of soft lips.

He’d definitely consider her a beautiful girl (ignoring the musket). If she were to ask out any other guy, they would all probably accept without question (if not for that musket). Being asked out by a girl who was capable of being the subject of gossip from day one wouldn’t necessarily be a bad thing (again, if not for that musket).



“Well...I do have a few things I’d like to confirm with you,” Seiya said.

“Very well, let’s hear it.”

“Are you pointing such a deadly weapon with the intention of threatening me, Kanie Seiya?”

“Correct.”

“And you’ll kill me if I refuse?”

“Yes.”

“You’ve also told me to accompany you to an amusement park. Am I right in assuming that, in other words, you’re forcing me to go on a date with you?”

Without letting her guard down, Sento Isuzu glared at him and nodded.

“It’s as you say. Well then, your reply, please.”

“Hold on, there’s no way I can answer to such a—”

A loud gunshot rent the air. A bullet flew out of the muzzle, creating a fissure in the wall behind Seiya upon impact.

Immediately afterwards, she fired a second round which pierced right through the fissure.

*It wasn’t a toy, but the real deal? In the first place, was rapid-firing even possible for a musket?*

Isuzu withdrew the musket and pressed the smoking muzzle on Seiya’s forehead.

“So, what will it be?”

“...I’ll go.”

*I didn’t have a choice.*

*What else could I have said?*



In the first year of high school, a mysterious girl transferred in during the third semester. And, after shooting down numerous attempts by other guys who tried to approach her, she chose me, the school's honor student—Kanie Seiya.

In hindsight, the situation could even be described as 'not bad', but only because the girl was a real looker; the musket she used was a bigger problem than anything else.

Simply put, Seiya liked being popular because it was cool. However, he disliked flirting with girls. It just wasn't his thing.

In fact, Seiya was a narcissist with a disproportionate sense of superiority to others. Superb intellects, good looks, and talented in both sports and the arts; there was nothing else he could have asked for. If he were to face his own reflection, he'd sweep his hair aside and compliment himself.

When the guys would praise his good results, he'd reply with "Why, of course. I'm much smarter than you guys, after all." And when the girls lauded his looks, he'd say "Everybody knows that, there's no need to tell me."

One could not deny the possibility that he was acting out of pure arrogance. As a result, he had no friends, let alone a girlfriend. But, he wasn't lonely. Not even a little. Brilliance certainly came with a price.

In the first place, why should he be forced to date girls, who would only stand to taint his dignity and charm?



**Chapter 1: The Definition of a Bad Dating Spot**

## Part 1

It was Sunday.

They'd planned to meet up at Amagi Station on the Kyoto line. Seiya was standing by a police post, lost deep in thought, when an officer approached him.

"Is something the matter?"

"Not really..."

Seiya shook his head. Assuming he *did* decide to tell the truth—

"Actually, I'm being forced to go on a date with a musket-wielding student. No, really, a musket. Looks like it came straight out of *The Three Musketeers*. It's a pretty popular weapon that's been used by mahou shoujo recently. Would you please arrest her?"

*There's no way he'd buy that.*

In addition to the officer, Seiya had considered seeking help from his teachers and parents, yet every single time he had arrived at that same conclusion.

"...Huh?"

The police officer looked perplexed. Things were starting to look awkward, so Seiya retreated to a neighboring convenience store.

He took a brief look at his reflection in the glass. Handsome, as always. His clothing choice, though minimalistic, accentuated his slender build; a dark jacket draped over a plain white V-neck, coupled with a pair of dark-blue pants. These were complemented with a pair of piercing eyes that were shaded by a fastidious hairdo. If anything, it made him look sharp.



Spicing things up with a pinch of elegance and talent created the perfect aphrodisiac. Just splendid! He'd fall for himself any day of the week. Being a heartthrob with excellent grades in school, it wouldn't be strange for a girl he'd never spoken with to ask him out on a date.

...The only problem being that it wasn't an invitation, but a threat.

As he'd thought, that girl must be one of *those* people. You know, a yandere. Loving and gentle on the surface, these vile, overly-attached beings often used lethal violence as an outlet of their affection.

Wait, hold on a sec.

*I'd understand if she used a normal weapon like a fruit knife or an ice pick. For her to brandish a damned musket scares the hell out of me. Speaking of which, just where did she draw that gun from? I could have sworn I saw her empty-handed as she approached. And just as soon as I had asked "What do you want?", her musket seemed to appear from out of nowhere. Now that's something I have to find out...*

"Sorry for the wait."

"Whoa!!"

Seiya nearly jumped out of his skin. He quickly turned around to face her, only to be taken aback once more.

Isuzu was wearing a casual outfit, yet her appearance was still supremely dazzling. More importantly, she did not seem to be carrying her weapon. That alone was enough to surprise Seiya.

"Let's go," Isuzu said in her usual emotionless tone.

"Where to?"

"Amaburi."

"Eh?"



“Amaburi. Short for Amagi Brilliant Park.”

Amagi Brilliant Park—an old theme park located 10 minutes from the train station.

“Our bus will depart from the second terminal. Follow me.”

Seiya tried to stop Isuzu.

“Hey, hold on!”

“There’s no time to waste.”

“I said hold on! Just why are we going to that amusement park, anyway?”

“It’s a theme park, not an amusement park.”

“Whatever. Before that, perhaps you should explain why I have to follow a complete stranger to some shady theme park?”

“Shady...”

With a swift maneuver, Isuzu drew the musket from under her skirt, spinning it in a 260-degree arc before pointing it between Seiya’s eyebrows.

Nearby, a mother and her child froze in shock.

“Mom, look at that! That girl’s wearing blue-striped panties! Basic equipment!”

Upon hearing that, the mother covered the child’s mouth and said, “Shh! Be a gentleman and pretend you’re not looking!”

Seiya stood rooted in a defensive stance, unable to verify the kid’s claim. Children seemed to be getting bolder these days, having the guts to spout things like that. But he had more important things to worry about right now.

“Why are you mad?” Seiya asked.

“...”



“You’re clearly hiding something from me. There are many things I’d like an explanation for, such as how you draw your musket and whatnot.”

“Let’s go.”

He was ignored.

Isuzu withdrew her weapon in a manner similar to before, and headed for the terminal.

\*

There had to be a reason why this theme park was located in a commuter town in eastern Tokyo.

*Amagi Brilliant Park. Just who in their right mind came up with a name like that, anyway?*

Amagi Brilliant Park (Amaburi) was an amusement park (or theme park, according to Isuzu) built during the ‘80s on the heels of Japan’s three-decade long ‘Economic Miracle’. Back then, it was trendy for young delinquents to get pompadour haircuts, and for idols to sport mushroom-like hairstyles. In this day and age, it’s no wonder why Amaburi received atrocious reviews compared to the other world-class theme parks.

Some call it, “the strange legacy of Japan’s bubble economy.” Others call it, “a couple’s nightmare.” The rest simply label it as, “trash.” And recently, residents of eastern Tokyo have regarded ‘Amaburi’ as the definition of a bad dating spot.

Seiya had a vague memory of visiting the place with someone when he was younger, though he had completely forgotten who that person was.

5 minutes into their journey they arrived at a hilly road covered with fallen leaves. As they moved further away from the residential areas, a large castle colored in pastel-blue came in view. *That’s pretty impressive.* He’d expected it to be a run-down facility given its age, but some serious thought must have been put into this place. Even the paint job was well done.



The bus was approaching the entrance of the castle.

“The next stop is ‘Amagi Brilliant Park’, please press the—”

As Seiya reached out, Isuzu tugged on his shirt.

“What’s up?”

“It’s the stop after this.”

“Wasn’t that castle the main entrance to the park?”

“That’s—” Isuzu muttered, but her voice was drowned out by the rev of the engine.

“I can’t hear you.”

“That’s a—”

“Like I said, I can’t hear what you’re saying!”

Isuzu moved closer, and with a reluctant expression, she took a deep breath.

“That’s a love hotel. It has nothing to do with the theme park.”

“I-Is that so...”

“It’s a common misunderstanding. Amaburi’s the next stop. That stop *used* to be the entrance to the park, but it moved about 10 years ago during a renovation. And the love hotel was built on...the leftover land.”

Upon closer examination, there was a sign saying ‘Hotel Alamo’, and an electric notice board next to the sign showed that there were ‘Rooms Available’.

*‘Alamo’...? Such a stupid name! The Alamo wasn’t a castle, but a fort. It used to be a key defensive structure during the war between Texas and Mexico—a bloody battleground! Definitely not a place for maidens in fairy-tales to dance with glass shoes!*







*Talk about misleading! How are they going to repay their customers for the confusion they've caused?*

Seiya's heart was about to burst from anger, but he suppressed it and calmly replied, "How deceiving. Shouldn't they have renamed the bus stop by now?"

"A request was submitted a while back, but was put off due to various reasons. All this causing their guests to get off the bus by mistake, and having to walk their way to the real entrance..."

"Guests?"

"Most theme parks call their visitors 'guests', and their staff members make up the "cast". Keep that in mind."

"Oh really? You seem to have some strangely specific knowledge of this matter."

Isuzu kept quiet, ignoring the statement once again.

After passing the hotel, they arrived at the next stop, 'Nishifutomaru', probably named after the residence nearby.

"We've arrived."

Following that, Isuzu and Seiya got off the bus.

After they walked about 80 metres up a gentle slope, the main entrance came into view. Cracks webbed the road leading up to the deserted gate. Though a rusty signboard read "'Welcome to Amagi Brilliant Park, the Land of Dreams!'," he didn't feel welcome at all.

*How should I put this...? It gives the impression that I'm being served half-assed food by a retiring old chef. To be honest, that love hotel deserved the title of 'The Land of Dreams' more.*

Isuzu produced her admission ticket and entered the park. Seiya followed suit, and took a step in.

In front of him was a plaza with a fountain in the center.



“...”

Everything seemed normal, save the fact that there was no water flowing from the fountain. In fact, the fountain was dry enough to kill the moss growing inside.

There was a huge citadel straight ahead, not too far from them. Unlike the ‘castle’ earlier, it looked rugged. Like it was built to resemble Jerusalem, designed to combat any invading pagan troops. On top of that, their Sunday crowd, when theme parks should be at their liveliest, was pathetic. Putting aside the fact that Seiya didn’t frequent theme parks, this was the first time he’d seen a place this sparsely populated in his life.

Cleanliness didn’t seem to rank too high in their priority lists, either.

“There’s garbage everywhere...” Seiya muttered.

Isuzu looked back, and asked, “Where shall we start?”

As she turned, her skirt swayed a little. It was only for a brief moment, but right then, Seiya felt like he was actually on a date.

“You’re the one who brought me here, so you call the shots,” Seiya said in an irritated tone.

Isuzu thought briefly and replied, “If that’s the case, let’s start with Sorcerers’ Hill.”

“Sorcerers’ Hill?”

“It’s one of the five areas in Amaburi, and where the mascots from Maple Land, the realm of magic, reside. A magical place, just like a fairy-tale.”

“But your expressionless face doesn’t give that impression at all.”

“Follow me.”

Isuzu walked north. According to the pamphlet, they were indeed headed to a place called ‘Sorcerers’ Hill’.



“Good grief...”

There wasn't any trace of affection. Could this even be called a date? Seiya was finding it hard to believe that she was bringing him here for fun.

*But if not for fun, then for what...?* He couldn't figure out her motives no matter how he tried. *I guess I should just tag along for now—*

In this shady theme park.



**Chapter 1: The Definition of a Bad Dating Spot****Part 2**

Sorcerers' Hill was just as Isuzu described. It really was themed after fairy-tales. Everything was colored in pastel, and the roller coasters and merry-go-rounds all seemed legitimate.

For starters, Isuzu brought Seiya to an attraction called 'Doki-Doki Coaster'.

She noticed how he was dragging his feet in a reluctant manner, so she asked, "Are you scared?"

"Of course not. I just don't think it's designed for grown men to ride on."

"Is that so? Then let's ride it."

The two sat on their seats with sullen looks on their faces, and with an awkward fanfare, the train began to move. Throughout the ride, its speed was pedestrian. There wasn't much distance between the highest and lowest point on the track, and the sharpest turn was head-tilting at most. For an attraction of that name, it didn't even make his heart pound once.

After getting off, Isuzu asked, "Was it fun?"

"Boring as hell."

"I see. Let's move on, then."

Without delay, she walked towards another attraction.

"..."

The next place was called 'Tiramie's Flower Adventure'.

It was a building about the size of a school gym, with colourful drawings of grass and flowers painted on its walls. An object resembling a Pomeranian canine stood at the entrance. It must have been a likeness of the mascot Tiramie.



The attraction's main activity involved up to 4 guests at a time moving around Tiramie's magical garden on a gondola. And of course, it was also—

“Terrible.”

The tracks were out of alignment, resulting in a violent, bumpy ride. It was certainly more thrilling than the Doki-Doki Coaster. Seiya felt sick.

The ‘talking flowers’ in Tiramie's garden made jittery movements, probably due to a neglected mechanical fault. Furthermore, he could not make out what they were saying due to the terrible audio quality. What was supposed to be “Welcome to Tiramie's Flower Adventure!” sounded like “Welcome to Tiramisu Flour Venture!” Truth be told, it was as shrill as a mandrake's shriek.

“How was it?”

“Part of me just died.”

“I see. Let's move on.” Her reaction was as cold as ever.

“Hey. Just how long are you going to keep this up?”

“What do you mean?”

“Never mind...”

With a disappointed expression, Isuzu continued. “At any rate, I believe you'll like that music theatre. It's just over there.” A big signboard announced ‘Macaron's Music Theatre’, with a drawing of a sheep-like mascot playing the violin. However, there was a ‘Closed’ sign hanging on it.

“Seriously? On a Sunday?”

“Macaron is the fairy of music. His music is superb, and he'll only play when he feels inspired. A true artist, indeed.”

“Right...”

“Let's go.”



A building named ‘Moffle’s Sweet House’ was across from the theatre.

Its size was similar to Tiramie’s Flower Adventure, and was decorated with a huge assortment of treats such as pancakes and whipped cream, similar to those in children’s stories.

“Welcome—” The receptionist (or “cast member”, according to Isuzu) greeted Seiya with a deadpan voice and handed a water gun to him. Upon closer inspection, though, it wasn’t a water gun, but a laser pointer shaped like a pistol. It probably emitted small laser beams upon pulling the trigger.

A large screen in the hall switched on, and displayed the instructions for the activity.

*Welcome to the shop of Moffle, the fairy of sweets! Unfortunately, lots of pesky mice have overrun the whole place! Use your magical water gun and chase them away!*

A set of advisories followed.

*Do not look directly into the muzzle (due to the laser).*

*Treat the magical water gun with care (since it is fragile).*

*Return the gun at the exit (probably because it was expensive).*

“Moffle will give a special souvenir to all who succeed. Good luck!”

It seemed simple enough. In essence, Seiya needed to shoot down the puppet mice with his laser pointer, and the number of hits determined his score. *Unlike the previous attractions, this one’s a game, eh?*

“Without further ado, let the battle begin!”

The double doors swung open.

It appeared that quite a bit of movement was involved in the game. It might have posed a problem if it had been crowded, but that was nothing to worry about, considering how empty it was on a Sunday.



“Off you go.”

Isuzu gave a gentle push, and Seiya stepped in.

The room was modeled after a kitchen. Replica appliances like grills, sinks and ovens were everywhere. Puppet mice were popping out at random from different places.

*Fire!* Seiya took aim and squeezed the trigger.

*Hit...miss...miss...miss...hit again.*

“They’re pretty fast...”

The puppet mice continued their assault.

*Miss...miss...miss...miss...finally another hit.*

“This speed is going overboard.”

“They’re moving into the storage. Don’t let your guard down.”

“Eh?”

Seiya entered the food storage compartment. Once again, the mice began popping about.

“Give me a break. There’s got to be a limit to how fast it gets, right?”

“You’re firing unnecessary shots.”

“Then what do you expect me to—”

“Unnecessary words, as well.”

Now, holographic mice were in the mix along with the puppets. They were weaving across the room, making feint actions and switching positions in rapid succession. Their actions were so swift that the average eye couldn’t keep up with them.



They ended up walking out of the 'battleground' without obtaining a satisfactory score.

There, the announcer spoke.

"What a pity! You tried hard, but couldn't kill them all!"

"K-Kill? We weren't chasing, but killing the mice...!?" *What's up with this inappropriate setting? Using words like 'kill' in a cheerful tea house like this causes even more shock to the customers!*

Ignoring Seiya's comments, the announcer continued, "Nonetheless, Moffle is grateful for your efforts! Please take a picture with him in the next room, okay?"

The door opened. With nothing left to do here, the two of them proceeded. After returning the gun into the box, they entered the final room.

"You can take a picture with Moffle here."

"You mean the fairy of sweets?"

"That's right, Amaburi's lead mascot."

"I'm not particularly interested in having pictures taken with people in suits."

"Why don't you give it a try? It'll be fun."

It didn't sound like fun at all, but Seiya had no choice but to follow.

They walked through the corridor and entered a photo studio. The right half was designed exactly like the sweet house; decorated with models of doughnuts and cakes, with a standard cash register on the table. A backdrop made especially for the photo-taking with Moffle. However, the all-important mascot wasn't there. For that matter, there was nobody in the studio at all.

"What's the meaning of this?" Seiya asked.

"That's because guests rarely come here," Isuzu replied. "They're probably resting inside."



“...”

“Ring the bell beside the cash register. They’ll come out after hearing it.”

Seiya did as he was told. The bell gave a soft ring. They waited a while, but the mascot—did not appear. Seiya tried again. This time, it rang loudly. However, there was still no response.

“...I suppose nobody’s here. Let’s get out of here.”

“Not yet, just a little longer.”

“Why should I? There’s no need for us to wait for such an insignificant mascot in this unmotivated—”

With a clack, the door to an adjacent office opened, and the mascot in question walked out.

*“Mofu.”*

It was small and adorable, with its head taking up two-fifths of its height. It looked like a mouse given its rodent teeth and dark round eyes, but it had the body of a wombat, or maybe a guinea pig. Furthermore, it was wearing a chef’s hat and apron.

A pretty orthodox example of ‘cute’, he’ supposed. But that was to be expected of a theme park’s mascot.

“This is Moffle, the fairy of sweets. He’s also the lead mascot of Amaburi. 144 centimeters tall, though his weight is classified information. Runs 35 kilometers per hour at maximum threshold. Possesses talent in baking and soccer. Likes doughnuts and other sweet things. Apart from his current outfit, he also keeps a tuxedo with him.”

“You don’t have to give such a detailed explanation...”

Moffle waddled towards Seiya with light, squeaky footsteps.

*“Mofu.”*



“He wants to take a picture with you. Is that okay?”

“...”

Moffle nodded briefly in response.

He whipped out a smartphone from his apron, and without so much as a ‘Cheese!’, took a picture of Isuzu and Seiya, and showed it to them.

“Wait a minute, aren’t you supposed to be in the picture as well!?”

“*Mofu...*” Moffle knitted his brows.

“What’s with that attitude? In case you haven’t noticed, we’re your customers!”

“Kanie-kun, please calm down.”

“Save your breath. I’m not going to snap or anything.”

Despite that, this mascot was getting on Seiya’s nerves. It must have been fate, knowing they’d be sworn enemies the moment they met each other.

“I-In any case, I’m done with this place. We don’t have to take pictures with this insignificant, useless, and vulgar mascot anyway. Let’s go.” That said, Seiya turned to face the exit. At that instant—

“*Mofu!*”

Moffle knocked Seiya down with a hard kick in the ass.

“W-What was that for!?”

Seiya got up and turned back to confront him.

Moffle had no intention of apologizing. Instead, he made a gesture like he was spitting on the ground.

That attitude of his was messed up.

“He only did that because you were spewing unpleasant remarks about him, you know.”



“Even then, I’ve never heard of a mascot who kicks their guests!”

In addition, Moffle was now readying himself, with both arms in a boxer’s fighting stance, as if telling Seiya to “bring it on.”

“This piece of—!”

*So that’s how it is, eh? Time for me to teach him some manners!*

Seiya wasn’t prepared to soil his own suit just yet, but he simply couldn’t let that slide. At the very least, he wanted to land a punch on him. But at that moment—

“Mofu!”

Moffle kicked off the ground, narrowing the gap between them in an instant and landed a clean hit on Seiya with his paw.

“Ughh!!!”

A lot of force was used in that punch.

*My head...is throbbing...and heavy... Those hands of his sure are something. Or paws, I mean. This simply wasn’t something a normal man dressed in a suit was capable of. So that’s what it takes to be the lead mascot in a theme park, huh?*

Seiya crouched in preparation for his counter attack.

Moffle maintained his pose, with arms raised to block any punches.

“Focus...”

He wouldn’t let himself be defeated by some filthy rat. He’d lose his pride as a man otherwise. *There’s got to be a weakness somewhere.*

“That’s enough,” Isuzu declared, drawing her musket out of seemingly nowhere again, and pointed it at them. “Any more of this and there might be bloodshed. I won’t allow this sweet house, full of hopes and dreams, to be stained by such violence. Let’s end this here.”

“This place had ‘hopes and dreams’...?”



*"Mofu..."*

"If you intend to resist, I'm fine with taking both of you as my opponents."

With that, she drew a second musket out from under her skirt, and leveled them both at their heads.

*"Tch..."*

*So she had more than one of those things. She sounded serious as well, might as well do as she says.*

Seiya took a step back. Similarly, Moffle lowered his fists (or paws, to be exact). However, he didn't appear to be afraid of her musket, for some reason.

"So, how was it, Kanie-kun? Did you understand Moffle better by talking with your fists?"

"Not really...It was pretty one-sided, after all."

"Have you made friends with him?"

"Hold up! Why should I make friends with that damned rat anyway?"

*"Mofu."*

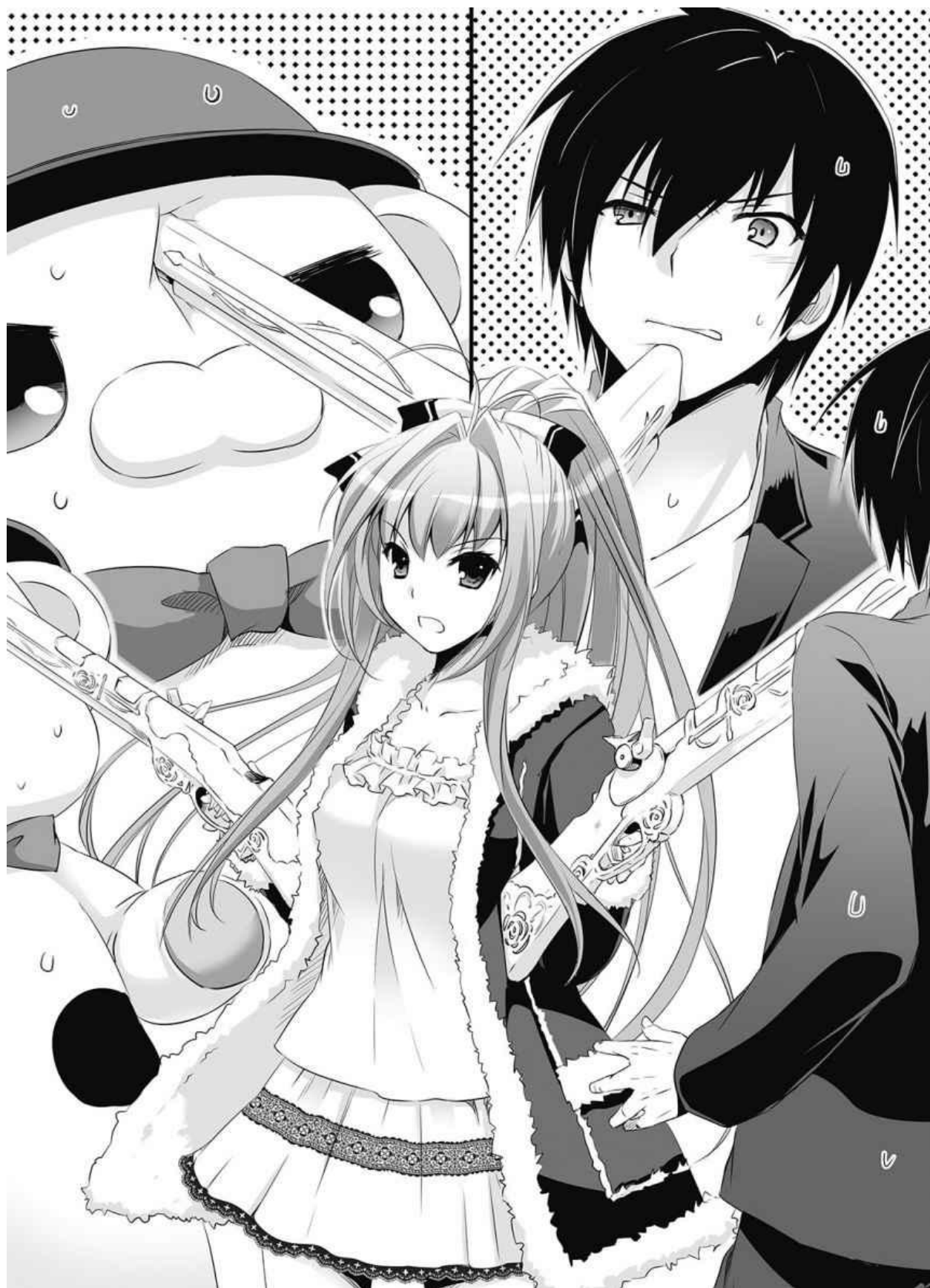
Moffle let out a displeased snort as well. It sounded quite realistic for a speaker that was built into a suit.

"...Anyway, we got our commemorative photograph taken, so let's move on for now."

"A commemorative photograph...?"

Isuzu took out her smartphone and showed it to him.







It showed a snapshot of when Moffle punched Seiya. A pathetic sight. Though it was blurred, it carried a strangely deep and profound message.

“I wouldn’t call that a commemorative photo per se...”

“Let’s go.”

Isuzu walked out of the exit and Seiya followed. Moffle spat on the floor and returned to the office.

*What on earth!? That damned mascot!! Definitely not just a rat in a chef’s uniform!*

“Seriously, just who is inside that suit...”

“There’s nobody inside.”

“What?”

“I’m talking about Moffle. There’s no one inside.”

“...? Ah...”

This wasn’t the first time he’d heard this. Many parents told their children that there was no actor inside a suit to avoid spoiling their fantasies. It is believed that for all theme parks, actors in suits are bound by absolute confidentiality. As such, it was taboo for them to talk about their work, and they’d be in deep trouble if anybody found out. Therefore, it wasn’t surprising for Isuzu to be saying such things.

“Is that so? Well, I guess that’s how it is then.”

Hearing his sarcastic reply, Isuzu turned around and spoke honestly, “You don’t understand. There’s really nobody inside.”

“Okay, okay, I get it. Let’s just leave it at that.”



**Chapter 1: The Definition of a Bad Dating Spot****Part 3**

And thus, putting their unpleasant experience at Moffle's Sweet House behind them, Seiya and Isuzu continued their exploration of the various attractions of Amaburi.

Unsurprisingly, there were many shops that were either mediocre or closed (despite the fact that it was Sunday) scattered everywhere. They visited a snack shop called 'Maple Kitchen' for a quick bite, but they only sold three food items: curry, yakisoba, and croquettes. And even then, they were told that it'd take an hour to prepare the yakisoba.

"An hour!? Why?"

"We haven't stocked up on the ingredients, you see. So I have to go to a nearby supermarket to buy them," said the part-time shop assistant.

*What crappy service!*

Seiya was just about at his limit. He slammed his hand down on the table and confronted Isuzu.

"So what's next, Sento? Don't tell me you intend to continue with this date!?"

"Are you angry?"

"You bet I am! With such a shady snack shop in this even shadier theme park, I bet that love hotel gives a better impression than this place! Even ignoring the terrible customer service, we haven't found a single place that's actually interesting here!"

Seiya spoke his mind. He no longer cared about being shot.

"This theme park is an insult to the concept of entertainment! The management might think that entertaining guests is the same as deceiving them, but they're



wrong! In order to entertain properly, the audience should be the top priority! It isn't something that can be half-assed; it requires true passion and will! However, I see none of that in this theme park! Not a single trace! If the cast members want to create a wonderland for the guests, they must first believe in themselves! In fact, I don't think this park could even fool kids to begin with! In other words..."

"..."

"In other words...ah..."

Isuzu's eyes were wide open. She was astonished by the words that came spewing out of Seiya's mouth.

*I messed up.*

He immediately started to regret his actions. All that despite his conscious effort not to say things like that out loud.

"To create a wonderland for the guests, they must first believe in themselves... This statement is certainly true, albeit hard to accept."

"..."

"I never thought that a mere high school student would be capable of saying such strong and profound words."

"That was just spur-of-the-moment, I probably read that in a book or something."

Seiya looked out the window, feigning ignorance. However, Isuzu continued to probe deeper.

"I was thinking you were angry for being forced to visit a hopeless theme park by a stranger, but that doesn't seem to be the case. Instead, your issue is with the theme park itself. Strange, don't you think?"

"Hmph, so you're aware of the trouble you've caused, huh?"

What Seiya said sounded arrogant, but Isuzu did not seem offended at all.



"I never intended to infuriate you, it's just that I wanted your opinion on this theme park's 'entertainment value'."

"Even so, you didn't have to be so nosy about this."

"...Kodama Seiya."

Upon hearing that name, Seiya's neck stiffened ever so slightly.

"A while back, there was a genius by that name who was capable of entrancing his audience with his acting. Along with that, it is believed that he could play the piano as well as the professionals, and also possessed a singer's voice. A little cheeky at times, but well-behaved in general. Furthermore, he was an excellent speaker. A parent's ideal child, so to speak. He certainly caused a sensation back then."

"..."

"But 5 years ago, Kodama Seiya suddenly disappeared from the public eye, and his resignation brought about mayhem for his company. Though it was claimed that he had other things like 'school' or 'well-being' to worry about, the real reason for his disappearance remains unknown. Even now, nobody knows where Kodama Seiya went."

Isuzu shifted her gaze to the window, looking at the theme park outside.

"If that person saw this place just once, I wonder what he'd have said."

"It figures..."

Seiya's blood was again boiling with hatred, though for a completely different reason.

"...And so you brought me here just for the sake of that?"

"You seriously think I'd ask you out on a date out of affection?"

Isuzu looked at Seiya with a genuine expression of disbelief.



“I don’t know what your motives are, but let me set things straight. The Kodama Seiya you speak of is long dead. If you thought that he could be of any help to you, then you’re very, very wrong.”

Seiya stood up from his seat.

“I’m leaving. Shoot me if you want, I don’t care.”

“I won’t stop you. But before that, please try these croquettes.”

Instead of drawing out her musket, Isuzu took the croquettes on the table and handed them to Seiya. Those were bought as a replacement for the yakisoba earlier.

“Huh?”

“Eat it before it gets cold.”

“I’m fine with it that way.”

“At the very least, just have a bite.”

For some reason, she was insistent on it.

Seiya unwillingly grabbed the croquettes and opened his mouth. These were bought from the snack shop, after all, so he didn’t have high hopes for it.

Or that’s what he thought, until he took a bite.

“...Mm.”

This was—Delicious. Completely beyond his expectations. The crust was crunchy, and its thickness was just right. It was juicy inside, flowing with authentic flavor, something only a skilled chef could produce. To be honest, Seiya had never tasted croquettes as good as this in his entire life.

“Delicious, wasn’t it?”

“Mm...ah...I’ll give you that.”



“These croquettes were made here. You won’t find them elsewhere.”

“Don’t tell me you made these yourself?”

From the way she talked up until now, he’d inferred that Isuzu had some kind of connection with this place. But if that was the case—

“Not me, but someone else. Shall we meet that person before you go?”

“Meet that person? I probably don’t know him though...”

“It won’t take long. Hurry and eat already.”

“...”

Unable to resist, Seiya munched on what remained of the croquettes. Simply delicious. So good, people might actually come to this park just for the sake of eating them. Seiya followed Isuzu while struggling to deny that he was only interested in meeting the person who made those croquettes.

After going through a door that stated “Do Not Enter. Authorized Personnel Only”, he was brought to the entrance of the back stage of Amagi Brilliant Park. Isuzu was holding a key in her hands.

“So you’re related to this theme park, after all.”

“Did I not mention that earlier?”

“No though I could tell from the way you talked.”

“Put this on.”

She handed him a pass similar to the one she was wearing. It was a visitor pass, with the words ‘Level 4’ printed on it.

“What’s with this ‘level’ thing?”

“It’s the level of clearance. New part-timers only get level 1, with the highest being level 5. That’s where the dangerous power generators and classified information are held.”



“Pretty impressive security you’ve got here...” It was certainly a sophisticated system, a stark contrast to the standard in the rest of the park.

“Not really. The level 4 pass I gave you will grant access to most places in the park.”

“Aren’t you placing a little too much trust in me? I’m an outsider, after all.”

“That’s because the person we’re meeting is in the 4th level. She’s the manager of the theme park.”

“The manager!?”

Isuzu guided him backstage. This was the first time Seiya had ever been backstage in a theme park. Disappointingly, it did not have the air of a management office at all; just a plain and boring office corridor. There was only cleaning equipment, safety evacuation instructions, cardboard boxes, and log books recording the shifts of the cast. If one were to see a picture of this place, they might have believed that this was a memorial for the Self-Defense Force members who died in the line of duty.

They descended a flight of stairs and walked to an elevator. Upon reaching it, Isuzu explained, “We’re now directly below Maple Land, the central headquarters of the theme park. This elevator will bring us up.”

“Maple Land...?”

That must have been the gigantic structure that he saw back when he’d just entered the park. It didn’t look like a castle from fairy-tales, though, since there were armaments installed in the walls, and a moat surrounding it. The whole building appeared fortified enough to wreak havoc on inadequately prepared invaders.

They got on the elevator. There was a sky garden just outside of the lift lobby.

A *sky garden*...the perfect description for what they saw. The sky above them was dyed in crimson, with a tinge of yellow from the sunset, and flowers budding from the warmth of spring were scattered around. A large fountain stood at the center of the garden. The scenery was a perfect blend between light and shadow, giving off a tranquil and elegant feeling. Seiya felt that, so far, this was the one area of Amaburi that left the biggest impression on him.

A young girl was standing by the corner of the garden. She had blonde hair which was brilliantly lit by the setting sun, and she was wearing a beautiful white dress that outlined her slender body.

The girl was stroking the flower petals and singing a tune to the birds perched on a nearby tree. Seiya had a sudden, brief sense of *déjà vu*, though he was sure that this was his first time meeting the girl.

As he was gazing at her figure, Isuzu said to him from the side, "Go on. I'll be waiting over here."

"Huh? But I..."

"Don't make her wait."

Seiya took a step into the garden.

The girl turned around, and a bird that had been on her finger flew off. Seiya was able to discern her facial features more clearly as he approached. She looked about 14 to 15 years old, at most. She seemed like a gentle and loving person. Seiya was dumbfounded. This girl had the potential to steal his heart, something nobody else had ever done. It was only when they were 2 to 3 steps apart when Seiya noticed—her eyes were not focused on him, but slightly above, staring blankly into the horizon far behind.

*Could it be that this girl is blind?*

While Seiya was hesitating, the girl spoke.

"Could you perhaps be Kanie Seiya-sama?"



“Eh? Yes, I am.”

As he’d guessed, she was indeed blind.

“I apologize for any trouble caused, Kanie-sama. I am Latifa Fleuranza, the manager of this theme park. Thank you very much for coming.”

*So she’s a foreigner, huh? Well to be fair, she doesn’t look Japanese. Also...the manager, she said? At such a young age?*

“Huh? Oh, uh... Thanks for having me here as well,” Seiya forced out a reply, still slightly bewildered.

Latifa had a natural expression, and spoke with a hint of excitement. It was as if she was expecting his visit to the garden. “Has Isuzu-san caused much trouble for you? If so, please forgive her. She’s not good at dealing with men.”

“Not at all. Well...apart from her threats. I’m fine at least.”

“I see. To be honest, I was the one who asked her to bring you here, because I’d like a favor from you.”

“A favor?”

“That’s right. Let’s talk over there.”

With that said, Latifa turned around and walking down the stone pavement. Despite losing her vision, she must have remembered the layout of the entire place by heart. There was no trace of doubt in her movements.

A terrace was up ahead, with a table decorated with marble and mosaic. There were wrought iron chairs beside it, coupled with a beautiful porcelain tea set prepared on the table.

“Please take a seat.”

“O-Okay...”

Latifa displayed great finesse in preparing the tea. After bringing the water into a gentle boil, she poured it into a teapot and placed the tea leaves.

“You have the scent of deep-fried food,” Latifa observed.

“Huh?”

“Did you eat the croquettes sold in Maple Kitchen? I hope you found them to your liking,” Latifa said teasingly.

“Did you make those?”

“That’s right. I make them every day, hoping our guests will be pleased with the park.”

So that was it. She was the one who made those splendid croquettes!

“Your croquettes were very delicious!”

“Why, thank you. Although I can’t see, my other senses are very sharp. As such, I make the croquettes by listening to the sizzle of the frying oil.”

“Isn’t it dangerous for you to manage the fire all by yourself?”

“Not at all. I’m confident in my croquette-making skills. As for tea brewing, not so much. Here, have a sip...”

Latifa handed him a sweet-smelling teacup, and as he brought it closer a pleasant aroma drifted from the tea. Seiya gave a light blow and took a sip. Delicious. Seiya was certainly no expert in tea appreciation, but he was put instantly at ease by its flavor.

“How was it?”

“Absolutely wonderful.”

“I’m glad you liked it.”

Latifa gave a gentle smile.



Watching her smile soothed his heart; it was just like watching the evening sun set down the apex of a mountain, making way for dusk to take its place.

Recovering from a brief daze, Seiya cleared his throat and asked, "Back to the topic, who exactly are you and what is it you want from me? I'd also like to know what this place is doing in the centre of the theme park."

"Of course. Have you taken a look around Amagi Brilliant Park?"

"We pretty much covered all of it today."

*Certainly had enough of this place already.*

"So what did you think?"

*The worst theme park I've ever been to.*

Those words would be so easy to say, but for some reason Seiya couldn't bring himself to utter them.

At any rate, Latifa sensed that something was amiss, and added, "I understand your dissatisfaction. I'm guessing things didn't turn out too well for you today?"

"That's...well..."

"Kanie Seiya-sama, the main reason I called you here today is to ask for your help in saving the theme park."

"What...!?"

Seiya's heart skipped a beat.

*What did she just say? Me? This damned place?*

"I'm asking you this as the princess of Maple Land, the realm of magic. Will you please be the manager of our theme park?"

*What on earth are you talking about?*

Yet, as dubious as it sounded, Latifa's actions, behavior and tone of voice were all too genuine.

Seeing that Seiya was at a loss for words, Latifa said, "You must think that I'm a weird person."

"No, it's just that..."

"Nonetheless, I am serious about asking for your help. As you can see, this theme park is at the brink of closure, and only you can save it."

"But even then, this isn't something I can just say 'sure!' to, don't you think?"

"Of course," Latifa said, lowering her eyes and smiling faintly.

"This might be incomprehensible for someone born in this world, but Amagi Brilliant Park is an Argel, an important resource collection facility, built by the people of Maple Land, the realm of magic."

*This theme park is...the realm of magic? And what's an Argel?*

"The realm of magic, you say?"

"The truth is, there are many magical realms around, such as Legunume Somni, the kingdom of dreams, and Politia, the republic of magical beasts. There's also the imperial state of Schubert that governs swordsmanship and magic, and Avenir, the realm of the future. Maple Land is only one of those realms located between the land and sea. Each of these realms have their own Argel, which also functions as a resource collection facility. Some of the popular ones include Dejima Land, Cosmic Studio and Highlander Fujimi."

"Right..."

"The Argel's primary function is to generate Animus, the physical manifestation of the happiness and excitement of people. We, the people of Maple Land, feed off Animus for survival."

"..."



Sensing how dumbfounded Seiya was, Latifa added, “I suppose you don’t believe me? Of course, I don’t think I’ll be able to convince you with words alone, so allow me to bestow magic upon you.”

“Magic?”

“The type of magic bestowed upon you is dependent on the will of Libra, so I do not know what it will be. However, that should convince you that I’m telling the truth.”

“Wha—?”

Latifa leaned forward with slightly flushed cheeks. Her dilated pupils concealed a tinge of embarrassment and uneasiness.

“Please hold still, Kanie-sama.”

“Huh?”

“Pardon my rudeness.”

“...!?”

He couldn’t back off in time.

Their lips met.





Chu—

*Soft...and moist... Why am I getting so worked up over a kiss? And what's this uncomfortable sensation running through me? Surely exchanging kisses with her doesn't count as an immoral act?*

Seiya could feel her deep breathing.

Latifa remained still, allowing Seiya to calm his nerves as he gradually got used to the sensation. It was then, though, that Seiya felt something rush through his mind. A stream of uncontrollable emotions—It got into the deepest parts of Seiya's consciousness and thoughts.

*What's gotten into me? All I know is that I got forced into a date by a strange girl, so what have I done to deserve this?*

Something was changing inside him. Something so strange, he couldn't tell what it was, where it was, or how it was being done. A magical phenomenon was happening.

“Remember this—”

In a deep, empty space within Seiya's consciousness, Latifa said, “These are the genuine and sincere emotions I have for you.”

The first wave that coursed through him was the warmth of love. That was accompanied by an undulating sensation of loneliness, followed by faint remnants of nostalgia.

Seiya could see a figure of a child, walking up ahead towards the sunset. The boy turned around, and said:

*I'll always be by your side.*

*Someday, I'll definitely save you—*

*Hold up, why am I having these visions—*

And, as sudden as the strike of lightning, Seiya lost consciousness.

**Chapter 1: The Definition of a Bad Dating Spot****Part 4**

Nightfall approached, and fireflies illuminated the theme park.

A total of 288 guests visited Moffle's Sweet House today. Out of those 288, only 3 took a photograph with Moffle, including that punk Kanie Seiya. Considering it was a Sunday, that was an incredibly low number.

The theme park used to have countless guests in the past coming especially to visit Moffle's Sweet House. Moffle recalled the children whom he played with and all of their cheerful smiles, along with their laughter, shouting, and joy.

*Those were all things of the past now, he thought. "Mofu..."*

He turned the power off and tidied up the place.

They did not have enough resources to hire a maintenance crew. As such, Moffle had to do everything by himself. The disinfection, the laser gun, the replacement of batteries, the reparation of damaged puppets, and the final lock-up of the place were now all part of his duties.

"See you tomorrow."

"See ya."

After wrapping things up, Moffle bid farewell to the part-timer and left through the staff exit.

They didn't even strike up a conversation with each other. Of course, he must have thought that Moffle was just helping out as a temporary suit actor due to the shortage of manpower. It couldn't be helped. After all, just how would he be able to convince the others that he was actually a fairy from the realm of magic?

Moffle headed for the guardhouse and returned the 'Moffle's Sweet House' key. After that, he signed off on the logbook and tapped his attendance card.



“How was today’s turnout, Moffle-san?” the old security guard, who knew about his true identity, inquired in a polite manner.

“It was pretty normal. Just had a small argument with a stuck up kid, *fumo*.”

“Must’ve been pretty tough, huh? Go teach that boy a lesson, you hear me?”

“Don’t worry about it, *fumo*.”

If it were any other day, Moffle would have joined the other mascots for a drink in their favorite yakitori bar, but he had matters to settle today.

“Something on today?” the security guard asked while conducting his regular bag checks.

“Yeah.”

One could not guarantee that the theme park’s employees wouldn’t smuggle any valuables for sale outside. As such, while a hassle, conducting spot checks on their employees’ belongings became a custom for many organizations.

“I’m meeting the manager for a bit, *fumo*.”

“Latifa-san, eh? Send my regards for me, would you?”

“Sure.”

That security guard was one of Latifa’s fans, Moffle recalled. In fact, there were many of them working here. One could say this was the only reason why Amaburi was able to meet the minimum staff count.

However, Moffle wasn’t one of her fans.

While it was true that he loved her more than anyone else, that was only because she was his niece. And likewise, Latifa did not harbor any romantic interest towards him.

After ascending the elevator, Moffle arrived at the sky garden, and Latifa came dashing towards him.

“Uncle!”

*How many times have I told her not to run?*

They embraced each other.

*She must have lost some weight, considering how light she’s become. I really should teach that punk a lesson.*

“So how was he?”

“I met him earlier, but since he passed out during the magic-bestowing ritual, I had Isuzu send him back to his place.”

“I see, *fumo*.”

Moffle felt a dull prick in his heart.

*So she kissed him, after all.*

The princess of Maple Land has the ability to give magical powers to any man she chooses—

—by kissing him.

It was believed that the type of magic bestowed depended on the individual’s needs. For example, fighting powers might be given to troublemakers, and a sickly person might acquire healing abilities. But ultimately, it was all up to the Goddess Libra.

“He came to my Sweet House and picked a fight with me just now. He was pretty weak, and I really don’t think he’s capable, *fumo*.”

“Come on now, you did read the report written by Isuzu-san, didn’t you?”

“Of course, *fumo*.”

An excerpt from the end of the report written by an elite from the Maple Land Imperial Regiment read:



...It is as such that I conclude that the aforementioned Kanie Seiya possesses two very contrasting, yet useful, talents.

For one, he is a strategist who is able to make calm and rational decisions.

On the other hand, he has the passionate mindset of an entertainer, having possessed experience and knowledge in the trade.

Handling such antinomies must have been a real hassle, and I can imagine them being a source of his distress.

In my opinion, he is precisely who we should entrust our lives to in order to save Amagi Brilliant Park from its impending demise.

First Royal Guard of the Maple Land Imperial Regiment,  
Isuzuruha Centollusia

Moffle was not particularly pleased with Sento Isuzu's thoughts on this. She might believe that Seiya was the Oracle's "chosen one", fated to be the savior of the park, but it was easier said than done. Just how was that kid going to save a whole theme park in such a short amount of time?

"I understand that Isuzu highly regards Seiya, but I have my doubts, *fumo*. I do not think that this downturn could be solved by hiring a mere high schooler."

There ought to be a reason for everything that happens, be it personal struggles or societal behavior. It didn't matter to Moffle whether Seiya was a genius or not; a single person could only do so much.

"So you're saying we should just sit here and do nothing, uncle?"

A brief silence ensued.

“...Of course not, *fumo*.”

“There has to be a reason why our guests aren’t coming; something that we’ve missed. That’s why we need Seiya-sama, who is also a guest, to provide us with another perspective.”

“I understand, *fumo*...”

And as he said that, Moffle made a brief calculation. Seiya had a mere two weeks to attract 100,000 guests, which in turn meant that he had to get...7,000 visitors per day on average.

*Impossible.*

Including Moffle’s Sweet House, the combined visitor count among all attractions didn’t even exceed 3,000. And that was their Sunday crowd. They’d tried everything, but to no avail. And if they couldn’t reach their quota by then, they would have the rights to the park revoked and transferred to *them*. The park would close and the entire place would be demolished. Then, *they* would build a golf course with the freed-up land. In other words, the cast of Amaburi would cease to be.

*And then, Latifa would...*

“Anyway, what are you going to do with Seiya?”

“For the time being, I told Isuzu to stay over at his place for the night. That way, she can help him if something happens.”

“...That’s worrisome. Seiya’s at *that* age and Isuzu’s too kind for her own good. If anything were to happen, that’d be—”

“That’d be...?”

Moffle cleared his throat, nearly choking on his own breath.

“Latifa...you don’t understand! All men are wolves! Just wait ‘til they go into beast mode!”



"I'm sorry, but I don't get it. What do you mean by 'beast mode'?"

Moffle instantly regretted having said anything, and avoided the question.

"Well I guess there's not much to worry about after all. Even if he manages an all-out Lupin dive<sup>1</sup> on Isuzu, he'd probably just get shot by her magical musket Steinberger."

"I'm really sorry but...what's a Lupin dive?"

There was a brief, awkward silence.

"Latifa, you'll understand when you grow up, *fumo*... No wait..."

Realizing that he'd made a reprehensible remark, Moffle sighed, "Sorry...I didn't mean it that way."

His heart sank, for he knew that growing up was not possible for Latifa.

"It's okay, one day; I will. I'm confident that Kanie-sama will be able to do something about this."

*That's just not possible, Moffle thought. Of course, unless a miracle occurs. Sadly, miracles are only called miracles because they never do.*

Daily visitor count: 2,886

Visitors needed: 100,121

14 days remaining



<sup>1</sup> A reference to a signature move of Arsene Lupin III, wherein one deftly leaps out from their full set of clothing to dive toward the object of their sexual interest.

**Chapter 1: The Definition of a Bad Dating Spot**

Intermission: Suzuran Shopping District, North of Amagi Station

Amaburi's future was indeed worrying, but for now, Moffle just wanted to have a drink and chill out. After exiting the park, he took the last bus back to the train station. The yakitori bar was located just north of Amagi Station, a minute's journey by foot.

As Moffle strolled down the streets, not a single person took notice of his appearance. The people who walked past him thought of Moffle as nothing more than a foreigner. This was all thanks to the Lala Patch, a magical charm given to Amaburi's cast. When worn, even the strangest of mascots would be perceived as normal people. It was thanks to this charm that the mascots were able to buy snacks at convenience stores, visit pachinko parlors and buy action figurines at Akihabara without getting into trouble.

The old lady who was preparing her tobacco shop for closure called out to Moffle, "Why, isn't it Moffle-chan? Pretty late, don't you think?"

"*Mofu*. Stuff happened, *fumo*."

Moffle raised his paw and gave a slight bow.

"I see. Actually, I've got some leftover pickled turnips from my brother; won't you take some with you?"

"Thank you, *fumo*."

"I'll be right back, Moffle-chan."

She went back into her store to prepare the food. After a while, she returned with an insulated vinyl bag.

"Eat it while it's still cold, okay?"

"I will."



Moffle bowed in respect and walked off.

The 20-year-old yakitori bar, named 'Savage', was three apartments away. The aroma of fried food drifted from its ventilators, and their glass doors were covered with oil stains.

Upon entering, the part-timer, Takami, prepared a pitcher of ice-cold beer. The beer server was right beside the cash register.

"Welcome, Moffle-san," having served customers all day, she greeted him with an exasperated tone. "Your friends are already drinking inside. Are you okay with your usual Hoppy?"

*"Mofu."*

Moffle was recently instructed by his doctor to control his purine consumption after being diagnosed with gout. Because the symptoms affected his work as a mascot, he had since limited his drinking to Hoppy, a beer-flavored and almost non-alcoholic drink sold in Japan.

"By the way, Takami-chan, I got some pickled turnips. Would you like some?"

Seeing the vinyl bag that Moffle was carrying, Takami smiled wryly.

"Oh, we get those quite often from the tobacco shop nearby."

"I see. Never mind, *fumo*."

Moffle stood up from the counter and walked into the guest room. Two of Amagi Brilliant Park's mascots, Tiramie and Macaron, were already drinking inside. It looked like there would only be the three of them today. Both of them seemed to have finished about half of their beer, savoring the negima yakitori on the table.

"Mmm, delicious, *ron*! This place's negima are the best!" Macaron exclaimed.

Macaron was a fluffy white mascot that resembled a sheep. He wolfed down the yakitori while sipping on his beer.

Heaving a sigh of relief, he went ahead and smoked a Marlboro, hurling abusive remarks at the government for the implementation of taxes on tobacco.

“This tastes awesome, *mi*! The flavor of a day’s hard work!” said Tiramie.

Tiramie was a pink, furry mascot who resembled a Pomeranian. Coupled with his flower-shaped hair clip and a yellow satchel bag, it was difficult for anyone to resist his cutesy appeal. He stirred his Umesu while badmouthing the rude guests he played with today.

“That filthy brat! He punched me 5 times in a span of 5 minutes, *mi*! It really hurts too, though you’ll only understand when you get hit, *mi*! If it wasn’t for the law, I would’ve beaten him to a pulp!”

“Ah, I get that a lot too, *ron*.”

“But wait, that’s not all! That brat’s mom was another problem herself, *mi*!”

“Shoot.”

“That woman in her thirties looked way too hot for a cold season like this, *mi*! Those exposed white thighs and huge boobies, along with teary eyes as she apologized to me!”

“Was she erotic?”

“A sex bomb, I tell you, *mi*! Enough to get accepted into an AV group, even though she’s married! I could’ve sworn she tried to hit on me then.”

“You’d die a horrible death, *ron*.”

“But check out her text...look, she just said she’s okay even if I were a girl. This is my best chance at revenge against that kid, *mi*!”

“You’re the worst, *ron*.”

The two of them carried out their usual conversation consisting of matters that could never be discussed inside the park. It was then that they finally noticed Moffle’s presence.



“Oh hey, it’s Moffle, *ron!*”

“You’re late, *mi!*”

The two of them moved to make space for him.

“*Mofu.*”

Moffle removed his furry footwear before entering the room. (By the way, his feet were fluffy and circular in shape just like his shoes. Shoes were all designed to match the wearer’s feet, after all.) It couldn’t be helped. Those shoes were as big as a full-sized bag; there was no way they would fit in the racks.

“I told you guys not to say stuff like that here. The walls have ears and the doors have eyes; we’d all be doomed if this ends up on Twitter or something.”

He certainly didn’t want to see things like—

[Mascots from Amagi Brilliant Park Badmouth Visitors in Yakitori Bar]

—appearing in the headlines. That’d certainly cause their reputation to plunge (assuming it could plunge any further).

“This place is safe, *mi*. We even have our Lala Patches on.”

“I don’t think there’s even any reception here in the first place, *ron.*”

Macaron unlocked his phone. Both 3G and Wi-fi were unavailable.

“Even then—”

“What’re the chances that our guests are here, anyway? In case you don’t know, I only have 128 followers on Twitter, *ron.*”

“...”

128 followers. No matter how unpopular Amaburi was, that number was just too small. Moffle recalled hearing about people un-following him after losing interest in his persistent preaching.

“How about you, Tiramie?”

“I forgot, *mi*. About 200, I’d say. For some reason, I keep getting blocked by people.”

Tiramie had a knack for dirty jokes. Even though he knew most of his followers were female, he continued making inappropriate posts. As such, they all ended up un-following him as well.

“How’s yours going, Moffle?”

“I don’t use Twitter, *fumo*.”

Moffle had tried using Twitter back when his friends first introduced it to him. However, he ended up quitting a month later, leaving his profile page stagnant. His feed overflowed with Macaron’s random ‘inspirational quotes’ and Tiramie’s attempts at picking up girls.

Also, just looking at all the other posts made him cringe. The ecosystem of Twitter was filled with tweets about people’s daily lives, and the more he read, the more uninteresting he felt his own life had become. Especially when it came to the posts of successful and influential people. Their publicized achievements and events further accentuated his sense of inferiority. After all, he rarely got to take part in anything special. Everything seemed to contrast with the boring and repetitive lifestyle he led. To top it off, there weren’t many things that Moffle could tweet about to contest them.

*“Today, I met an awesome guest!”*

*“And I had a great time.”*

*“I’ll be sure to work even harder to make my guests happy!”*

—Definitely not going to work.

*“Life sucks. And Mondays are the worst. Someone please kill me. The trains should just get bombed, and our park should just swallow a meteorite. In fact, everybody should just die.”*



*Can I even post such things in the first place? Of course not...*

Moffle couldn't bear to post such nasty comments. In the end, he could only watch everything in silence.

It was then that Takami entered the room with a jug of beer.

"Here it is, Moffle-san. Your usual Black Hoppy."

*"...Mofu."*

"Can I get you anything to eat?"

"I'll have some chilled tomatoes and tofu. Also, get me some yakitori; I'll leave the rest to you."

"Roger~"

Tiramie watched intently as Takami walked away, smirking to himself, "Nice ass you've got there, Takami-chan."

"What the hell's wrong with you, you idiot dog!"

"You're always saying such things, *fumo!*" Macaron and Moffle yelled, voicing their unhappiness throughout the room.

"Didn't you just get us banned from the other shop a while back, *ron!?*"

"I was just saying it for fun, *mi!* Please don't be so agitated, *mi!!!*"

**Chapter 2: The Mascots' Customer Service Sucks!****Part 1**

When Seiya woke up, it was already morning.

“Ugh.....”

He got up from his bed, only to realize that he was still wearing his outfit from yesterday.

*How was I brought back here...? Damn, I can't remember a thing.*

He glanced at his watch. It was only a little past 7 in the morning. He had originally planned to challenge some people in an online game (of a grand strategy genre) last night, but oh well. He made a mental note to send an apology to his opponents later and headed for the bathroom to prepare for school. He intended to make use of his time in the shower to examine his current situation. After all, too many things had happened—he visited some pathetic theme park, met a princess named Latifa, been asked an absurd favor, and been kissed. It all seemed too surreal.

“Damn it... Just what am I supposed to do about this?” Seiya pouted. And when he opened the bathroom door—

He saw Isuzu, half-naked, putting on her clothes. Actually, one could argue that she was completely naked, save for her knee-high socks. Though Isuzu had her back to him, he was still able to see the outlines of her breasts as she put on her striped bra.

*What a strange order of dress.*

That was the first thought that came into Seiya's mind. Following that were ‘Nice ass you've got there’, ‘Why do you smell so good?’, and ‘So you're into stripes, huh?’.



*Naked>socks>bra*. Certainly a sequence that Seiya could not comprehend. Why on earth was she taking a shower in the house of a complete stranger, anyway? Seiya decided to leave such questions for later.

“...!?”

Isuzu looked over her shoulder and stared at Seiya with a mysteriously calm expression.

Completely dumbfounded, he slammed the door shut before she could say anything. He tripped back a couple of steps and banged his back against the wall.

“...H-Hey! Aisu-*neesan*!”

Moments later, Kyuubu Aisu came crawling out of her bedroom.

“Ngh...What do you want so early in the morning? For god’s sake, I’m dead tired from that all-nighter.”

Although Seiya addressed her as ‘*Nee-san*’, Aisu was actually his aunt. She was 26 years old with short, black hair and wore a plain T-shirt. She had considerably huge breasts, currently worked as an editor for a certain publishing company, and lived her life like an outlaw. She also reeked of alcohol and tobacco, yet she had a strangely youthful complexion.

“Oh, Seiya. You’re awake.”

“*Nee-san*, why is there another woman in the house!?”

Seiya frantically pointed towards the bathroom, but Aisu remained calm.



“Another woman? Oh, you mean Isuzu-chan? Is she in the bathroom?”

“Just answer my question! Why the hell is she in the house!?”

“.....Last night, she brought you all the way to our doorstep, saying that you suffered a light concussion when you tripped and fell during your date. After determining that it was nothing serious, we decided to let you rest. I offered to let her stay the night since the last train had already departed.”

*Well, I suppose that's just her style.*

After all, Aisu-neesan never paid attention to anything, apart from her work. Even if a burglar knocked on our front door at 2 in the morning claiming to do “repairs,” she would simply respond saying, “Ah, Seiya called you guys, right? Come in!” and go right back to sleep. And that was precisely why—

*There's gotta be a limit to how dumb she can get! Did she seriously believe such a blatant lie?*

Seiya was completely appalled by her nature. But as he was thinking, a strange phenomenon occurred.

*(Would you look at that, my dear Seiya's finally gotten himself a girlfriend! Seeing how he's matured so much and that he no longer resents girls makes me so happy as his guardian~)*

Aisu's voice resonated within Seiya's thoughts. However, her lips remained sealed. Even then, Seiya was absolutely sure he just heard her voice. “What...”

“Hmm?”

“Hey, Sis. You didn't just say something strange, did you?”

“Huh?”

“You just said I became more mature.”

Hearing that, Aisu's eyes widened. “I-I have no idea what you're talking about!”



“Your mouth was closed, but you outright told me yourself just now. You said that I’ve matured, I no longer resent girls, and something about...being happy as my guardian.”

She immediately covered her mouth with her right hand and tried to conceal her shock. “Huh, but I didn’t say anything at all. Quit pulling off jokes like that; it makes me sick.”

“That’s my line. I don’t know if you used ventriloquism or whatever, but don’t tease me like that.”

“Ventriloquism?”

“You just used it, didn’t you?”

*Wait, to think of it, I never knew she could do such a thing.*

“How would I know? Oh, right, maybe I’m still sleepy and not thinking straight. Guess the alcohol from last night hasn’t fully dissipated yet. At any rate, I’m going back to sleep. Don’t be late for school.” And with that, she returned to her bedroom and slammed the door shut.

Before Seiya had time to reflect on what just happened, the door to the bathroom opened.

“Interesting conversation there.”

“Whoa...?”

Sento Isuzu peered out of the bathroom, already dressed in her school uniform. She did not appear to be bothered by the incident from earlier.

“There was a small gap in the door, and I managed to overhear the conversation between the two of you.”

“And what of it?”

“I think I’ve figured out what your magical power is.”

**Chapter 2: The Mascots' Customer Service Sucks!****Part 2**

It was the dreaded Monday rush hour, and the two of them could not afford to goof off.

Seiya quickly put on his uniform, and after having some Cocoa Pops with milk, he and Isuzu headed for school. Aisu was still snoring loudly, so she did not send them off.

"So, are you going to explain what's going on?" Seiya asked as they were walking towards Yanokuchi Station. The train would arrive at any minute, so their pace naturally quickened.

"Of course," said Isuzu. "I would literally feel like dying if I were to take less than 3 showers a day, or at least once every 8 hours. Having stayed over at your place, I was at my limits, so I went ahead and borrowed the shower."

"...That wasn't what I was referring to, but..."

"I see... Then what sort of explanation were you expecting?"

"I want to know more about Latifa and this "magical power" you were talking about."

"Oh, *that*." Isuzu nodded. "After the magic-bestowing ritual by Her Highness, you suddenly passed out. Even after the sky had become dark you had not woken up, so I flagged a taxi and brought you straight to your doorstep."

Nonetheless, there was something he was more interested in.

"Then what's that "magic-bestowing" thing you were talking about?"

"Latifa is the princess of Maple Land. She is able to bestow magical powers to normal people through a kiss."

“A k-kiss?”

“You don’t know what that is?”

“Of course I do...”

*I knew it. That was definitely not just a dream. Latifa, give my first kiss back to me! No, wait, actually it wasn’t really all that bad, but...was that really okay? I mean, to put it another way, it’s just like defeating an RPG boss by pure luck while still at level 3, thereby not being able to see the proper ending of the game! That’s just plain boring!*

While Seiya was thinking, Isuzu continued her explanation.

“The type of magical power granted depends on the individual. One might be able to shoot laser beams from their eyes, grow sharp claws from their knuckles, or even control a hurricane.”

“Does that even count as magic...?”

*In fact, wouldn’t those people just be mutants? I’ve definitely heard of those powers somewhere...*

“That was just an example. The power you’ve acquired appears to be some sort of mind reading ability, allowing you to listen to the voices of people’s hearts by focusing on them. There have been records of such powers written in ancient books, however...”

Seiya looked intently at Isuzu. She understood and stopped talking.

*Focus.*

Seiya could hear a voice resonating within him. It felt faint, yet so close.

*(“...however, it seems that it can only be used once per person. Furthermore, its duration is limited. So, did it work? Answer me if you heard this.”)*

The voices stopped.



Isuzu was looking directly at Seiya, as if expecting some kind of reply.

“What the...you’re right, I was able to hear your thoughts. It’s a one-off thing, and the duration is short, you say?”

“Glad you’re able to pick up quickly.”

“Hmph. Though it’s still a little fishy, it seems to be the truth.”

Despite being told about ridiculous things like magic, Seiya did not seem perplexed. After all, he had already lost all faith in logic after spending his whole Sunday in such a weird place.

*The power to hear people’s thoughts? Whatever, this power is real and already within me, so the next logical step would be to try and understand it a little more. After all, there’s no point in worrying about this. To be honest, I’d be happy if I got superhuman strength or the ability to copy skills, but what right do I have to complain? I’m just gonna have to suck it up and take advantage of the situation! First things first. Let’s try it again!*

Seiya focused on Isuzu, but nothing could be heard.

“...”

“Guess the ancient records were right. You can’t read my thoughts anymore, can you?”

“...How can you be so sure? What if I was just pretending that I couldn’t hear your thoughts?”

Isuzu did not waver at Seiya’s satirical remark. “Impossible.”

“Oh, really?”

“No doubt about it. I was thinking of something incredibly obscene.”

“W-What?”

*Obscene? Just what on Earth was she thinking about...!?*

“I’m kidding.”

“Ugh...”

“Nonetheless, it’s pretty much confirmed, since you weren’t able to verify my claim earlier. There’s no doubt that this can only be used once per person.”

“Tch...”

*To be able to pull off a trick like that...this woman is dangerous. She did the same thing at that snack shop yesterday too. I have to be careful not to let my guard down when I’m with her.*

*I must admit, though, I was a little careless with that. If I had done it at the right time, I might have been able to fish out some of her weaknesses.*

“Kanie-kun. By any chance, were you disappointed that you’re no longer able to discover my weaknesses?”

“Hey, don’t tell me you can read minds as well?”

“Not really. It’s just the most natural thing one could think about given the situation.”

“Damn it...” Seiya wasn’t particularly pleased with how it turned out.

“Well, whatever. I’ll just try it on someone else.”

Testing his abilities on one person would prove nothing. Seiya decided to try it again on a salaryman who was walking towards the station. Given that it was highly unlikely for them to meet again in the future, there was no problem in using him. Once again, Seiya heard a voice.

*(“...Ah, I’m dead tired. I left the house late today, so I’ll probably miss a train or two. I guess that means I won’t bump into her at the station today. What a shame, that’s the only thing I look forward to every day...”)*

*Whatever, serves you right.*

Following that, Seiya tried it on a lady who was walking to work nearby.

*("I hope it's working... Or maybe I should call Takeshi before he leaves for school and get him to check if my drama's being recorded? No, that won't do, Takeshi hates Korean dramas. What should I do...")*

*That's your own problem.*

The next up was a student who was fixated on his flashcards. Judging by the uniform, he must be from another nearby high school.

*("1914, the Congress of Vienna. 1914, the Congress of Vienna. 1914, the Congress of Vienna. 1914, the Congress of Vienna...")*

*Now that's bad. The Congress of Vienna was held from 1814 to 1815, and was one of the most important conferences after the Napoleonic Wars! 1914, you said? You're in deep trouble, my friend, 'cause that's a hundred years off the mark! What you're referring to is World War One!*

"Ugh!!" Seiya was extremely tempted to point out his mistake. He tempered his emotions and tried to use his magic ability on each of them a second time. Of course, it didn't work.

"...It's as you said, Sento. Its duration is pretty short, and I can't use it on the same person twice."

"There have been records of people having the same ability, after all."

"Hmph."

From his experiments, Seiya discovered one thing: he was unable to obtain any written information through his ability. The lady back then was the perfect example. While he knew that Takeshi was probably the name of her son, he didn't know how to write the kanji for 'Takeshi'. In other words, rather than "mind reading", Seiya could only listen to the voices of people's hearts. Furthermore, it could only be used once per person. Bearing that critical drawback in mind, Seiya could not afford to waste this ability.



They were approaching Taninokuchi Station, Tokyo's commuter town located close to the edge of the Kanagawa prefecture. Its surroundings were barren, with no shops around save for a laundromat, a grocery store, and a snack shop. A green foliage expanded throughout the south. Although Taninokuchi was less than 30 minutes away from Shinjuku, it looked more like a suburb than a city.

Seiya shifted his gaze away from the scenery and asked, "There's still a lot of things I'd like to know. Just what is this 'Maple Land' thing you were talking about?"

"It's a realm of magic located between the land and the sea."

"I've heard that many times already. I want to know the truth."

"But that is the truth."

*Does she seriously expect me to believe that a magical kingdom exists in such a place? Well, whatever.*

"Also, we will be heading to the theme park after school today. After all, we weren't able to finish our conversation from yesterday because you passed out."

Of course, Seiya made a big fuss about it, but since Isuzu threatened him with her musket again he had no choice but to comply. Throughout the whole day in school, Seiya was gritting his teeth in anger. Furthermore, while having lunch by himself, he overheard some students spreading rumors about him.

"That Kanie Seiya met up with Sento Isuzu at Amagi Station yesterday and boarded the bus for Hotel Alamo! Today, they even came to school together, and they seem to be on very good terms with each other!"

*Stop with the jokes!*

Seiya wanted to shout at them, but he was having his meal inside a toilet cubicle, so an even bigger problem might arise if he actually did.

"What the heck! That Kanie Seiya actually ate curry bread inside the toilet! What a loner! No wonder he has no friends!"

**Chapter 2: The Mascots' Customer Service Sucks!****Part 3**

Even after having endured the day's worth of frustration, Seiya was dragged back to Amaburi by Isuzu.

"So..." After entering through the staff entrance, Seiya asked, "Where are you bringing me this time?"

Isuzu remained silent and glanced at her phone. After appearing to read a text, she started fumbling with the buttons in an awkward manner.

"Hey."

"..."

"At the very least, apologize before you use your phone in the middle of a conversation. Haven't your parents taught you any manners?"

"..."

"Not gonna say anything? I'm leaving, then."

As he attempted to walk off, Isuzu grabbed Seiya's collar.

"Hey...!"

"How do I type emoticons on this?" She showed Seiya her phone.

**RE: They're here, *fumo***

**Got it. I'm at the entrance on the first floor. I've brought Seiya with me.**

**>Sender: Moffle**

**>Recipient: Sento Isuzu**

**>The guys from Amagi Development are here, fumo.**

**>They've entered Conference Room 3. Come here ASAP.**

This was certainly a dubious message. First of all, the recipient was Moffle, the mascot whom Seiya fought with. Also, why was Moffle involved in administrative matters? These people from 'Amagi Development' seemed to be a point of interest as well, given that Moffle said they were coming.

Putting those suspicions aside, Seiya asked, "I don't really know what you guys are up to, but at any rate, I take it that you want to put the emoticon after 'I've brought Seiya with me'?"

Isuzu nodded.

"What kind of emoticon?"

"One that is smiling and waving its hands, please."

"Okay...give it to me for a sec."

**I've brought Seiya with me. ^^ノ**

"Is that okay?"

"Hmm...I guess that's fine."

*What's with that reaction? What emoticon would elicit more than a 'fine'?*

More importantly—"So...where are you bringing me to?"

"To meet the guys from Amagi Development."

"Amagi Development?"

"They are what you would call our 'enemies'."

They walked into a short building opposite the theme park. Conference Room 3 was located on the third floor. The room was plain, with discolored long tables and pipe chairs. A dirty whiteboard hung on the wall.



The ‘enemies’ that Isuzu mentioned sat in the room. There were 3 of them in total. The two men on each side looked like normal businessmen. The guy in the middle, however, looked to be younger, perhaps in his mid 20’s, similar to Aisu, Seiya’s aunt. The three of them wore the same high-grade chic grey suits. Their eyes looked like predators that had found their prey, and their grins bore fangs that spelled trouble.

The young man glanced at Seiya and introduced himself.

“The name’s Kurisu Takaya of Amagi Development.” He took out a simple business card and handed it out.

However, Seiya did not have a business card. He accepted it and lowered his head in respect.

Kurisu straightened his face and asked, “Pleased to meet you. This student is...?”

“He’s an intern. He will be documenting the minutes of today’s meeting,” Isuzu explained.

“An intern; I see. What about your manager Latifa-san?”

Isuzu was the only cast member present in the meeting room. Seiya had thought that the arrogant mascot (or person inside the suit?) Moffle would show up, but that did not seem to be the case.

“Our manager is not feeling well today, hence she will not be coming. I, the acting manager, will be speaking in her stead. I believe we informed you via email earlier.”

“I understand.”

Having spent so much time and effort in coming down today only to be told that his client was absent should have been very frustrating to him. But strangely enough, Kurisu accepted the explanation without a qualm.

It was obvious that the two men next to him weren't pleased, but after Kurisu glared at them, they quietly swallowed their unhappiness. Kurisu must have been a big shot in the company.

After a brief moment of silence, he continued.





“Alright, Isuzu-san. I’m sure you’re aware of the reason we’re here today. In the event that Amagi Brilliant Park is unable to attract the specified number of visitors within the next two weeks, its rights will be handed over to Amagi Development.”

“...Yes,” Isuzu answered, making sure not to reveal her emotions.

“Let’s see now...according to this contract made in 1982, if Amagi Brilliant Park is unable to draw 1 million annual visitors for 5 consecutive years, the management rights will default to Amagi Development. As such—”

Kurisu Takaya handed over copies of the contract and statistics, and continued his lengthy explanation. After listening to it, Seiya had a good grasp of the situation. In short, Amaburi was in deep shit.

Amagi Development was a large shareholder among this town’s business, and they were dead set on bringing Amaburi to the ground. If they couldn’t fulfill the criteria stated in the contract, Amaburi would be essentially theirs. They had two weeks left, with more than 100,000 visitors to bring in. Once they got the rights, they might build a golf course or housing estate on the freed-up land. In any case, Amaburi was done for. 100,000 visitors in 2 weeks. An impossible feat, so to speak. It was safe to assume that the park was already in the process of closing. Of course, Kurisu’s main motive today was to discuss the liquidation of assets.

“It seems to me like you aren’t making any preparations for your closure at all. There aren’t any notices up, and the phone lines, water networks, and electricity are still operational. This is truly unfathomable. Would you mind providing an explanation to this?”

“That’s because...” Isuzu gulped. “...we still can’t guarantee that we won’t meet the quota.”

Kurisu smiled.

“Can’t guarantee? Please don’t joke with us; your ledgers are all in the red! You’ve nearly exhausted your funds and your facilities are run-down! Well, it’s probably just a trend; there’s nothing much you can do about this outdated park

anyway. It would be best if you'd hurry up and get your assets sorted to minimize your losses."

"We are fully aware of this, but..."

"No, you aren't. I know you all too well. All you people think about is the cultural value of the park and that it's a sin to profit from it, isn't it?"

"We didn't say that at all."

"It's all the same. Even theme parks are businesses in nature. Do you need me to tell you how much trouble you're imposing on others?" With his fountain pen still held in his hands, Kurisu punched in some numbers on his calculator.

"Let's see now. Assuming an average household with 4 family members earning 4 million yen per year visits this theme park about 2-4 times a year..."

"...And then?"

"This is just an example. Now, according to your visitor count last year, in order for you guys to break even, this family needs to spend...give me a minute."

The sounds of the button presses reverberated throughout the room. While waiting, Seiya did a quick calculation just like he would when watching a quiz show.

"85,000 yen."

"I'm sorry?" Kurisu, who had just finished his calculations, asked in surprise. The two men beside him were equally shocked.

"85,000 yen. A hefty sum for the average family, I'd say."

Kurisu looked at Seiya, seemingly impressed. "That's a rather accurate estimation. The answer's 83,200 yen."

"Hmph."

*That was unexpected, though I'm sure I would've gotten an even more accurate amount if I had known the content of the park's electricity bills.*

"Assuming you weren't just making a wild guess, that's some skills you've got there, young man. Why don't you come and intern at Amagi Development instead?" Kurisu said, though it was impossible to tell if he was serious or not. The two men kneaded their eyebrows in discontent.

"Appreciate the offer, but I'll pass..."

"Well, that's a shame. I was even thinking of mentoring you personally," Kurisu shrugged. "Anyway, back to the topic. So in order to sustain your 'fun and games', each family would have to spend 83,200 yen. Not gonna happen."

*He's right. They could go on an overseas trip instead for that price. No family would pay that much for a mere excursion.*

"It would be absurd to ask that much from an average family. Mind if you tell me what sort of special service you are offering that would warrant such costs?"

*The hell would I know?*

Seiya grumbled in silence. Isuzu gave an uneasy expression, unable to answer Kurisu's question.

"That's...well... If you could just give us a little more time..." Isuzu stuttered as she tried to reply.

From the side, Seiya could see that she was putting on a sullen expression and trying not to let her emotions take over. For some reason, he felt that this situation was akin to a commander questioning his subordinates for failing to defeat an opponent.

"So be it, then. Your guests are all idiots, anyway."

"...!" Isuzu swallowed her breath. It was apparent that she wanted to talk back, but somehow managed to control herself. In the end, all she could manage was a soft reply. "Our guests are...idiots?"



“Am I wrong?”

*This is bad*, Seiya thought. If he were right, this would be the part where Isuzu draws her musket out from her skirt. Seiya leaned forward in an attempt to stop her.

“I see. I understand where you’re coming from,” Seiya replied, forcing out a smile. “It’s true that we’ve yet to make any preparations for the closure, but we’ll do it soon. ...Am I right, Sento-san?”

Isuzu was extremely reluctant, but nodded obediently.

After a careful observation of their behavior, Kurisu sighed. “We came to make sure of that, because it didn’t seem to be the case. Now, would you please excuse us?”

The three of them packed up their notes and left the conference room.

## Chapter 2: The Mascots' Customer Service Sucks!

### Part 4

After the people from Amagi Development left, Isuzu asked, "Why did you stop me back there?"

"What?"

Seiya had a good idea of what she was referring to, but asked anyway.

"You stopped me from taking out my musket when that guy was insulting our guests."

"Of course. Any sane person would do that."

*Just what are you trying to say?*

"You're right. I was being a little too rash. I had even thought of firing right at their faces."

"If you had done that, we'd be in deep trouble."

"Yeah..." Isuzu sighed. "Cleaning up their exploded heads and brain matter would have been too much of a hassle. Thank goodness I didn't kill them."

"You're one to talk."

*I don't even know what's going on anymore. Furthermore, it's hard to imagine what she'd resort to when she was **really** angry.*

"Also, come to think of it, that was pretty interesting."

"What was?"

"The number you guessed. That was a very accurate estimation. Did you read his mind?"

"Of course not," Seiya smiled wryly.

He did not use his magical power on Kurisu; he had only taken into account the information he had beforehand. Of course, he did not know the running costs and employee count last year, so he used a mind game called the Fermi Problem, designed by physicist Enrico Fermi.

It involved making use of information already on hand to make intelligent estimates for problems like ‘how many piano tuners were there in a certain town?’ While this technique would not give the exact answer, it was often used as a guideline to back actual calculations. Since the detailed explanation of this technique was full of boring numbers and would probably take up 8 pages, Seiya decided not to delve into the matter.

“That was just a wild guess. Nothing more than pure luck.”

“...I see.”

“Given that my power can only be used once, I figured it would be better not to waste it on a trivial calculation.”

“...You’re right,” she replied in a weak voice, briefly nodding her head.

“So why did you bring me to meet them?”

“I wanted you to meet our enemies.”

“So that I’ll know who we’re up against when I become the manager?”

“That’s right.”

“Enough with the jokes!” Seiya slammed his hand down hard on the table. He was at his limit. And as he peered at Isuzu, she did not look back, but instead remained fixated on a random part of the room.

“You’ve threatened me with a weird musket, stole my precious weekends, and you’ve still got the gall to ask for my help. What do you treat me as? A retard?”

“...”



“No answer? Then let me rephrase it. If I were to refuse, what would you do? Kill me?”

“I...”

She responded with guilt. She certainly had no interest in drawing her musket.

The room became silent, and only the distant noise from a roller coaster could be heard. It was then, Isuzu finally answered.

“...I never planned to kill you from the start.”

“Hmph.”

That was pretty obvious. It’d be stupid for her to kill him because of something like that.

“My family has a long military background and I was raised for the purpose of protecting the royalty of Maple Land. As such, I was brought up very strictly.”

“Uh *huh*.”

“So I didn’t know how to ask otherwise.”

“And what about your gun?”

“Its name is—”

Once again, Isuzu drew her musket out from her skirt.

“The magical muzzleloader ‘Steinberger’. It was passed down to me, and certain magical properties can be imbued into the shot depending on the bullet used. By the way, I’ve loaded the bullet called ‘Pain Bringer’ that inflicts about twice the amount of pain of stubbing one’s little toe against a furniture leg.”

“It only inflicts pain and nothing else?”

“Indeed. Do you want to give it a try?”

“Stop it,” Seiya flinched as she pointed the musket at him.

“It’s okay, you won’t die from it.”

“That’s not the point! Furthermore, the description of the pain is way too specific...”

“Anyway, what I’m saying is that I didn’t have any intention of killing you.”

Isuzu put her musket away.

“Amaburi’s staff shortage is severe enough that they made me temporary manager.”

“Why don’t you just hire a professional from a recruitment agency?”

“We did, but they all ended up leaving.”

“Why is that?”

“Well, my musket might have had something to do with it...”

“Hey!”

“I’m aware it’s my fault. In order to prevent the situation from escalating, I even used the bullet ‘Forgotten Realm’ so that they don’t remember what I did.”

*I never knew such a convenient bullet existed! I wonder if I could have my memories of coming here erased as well?*

“It was Latifa-sama’s oracle who chose you, but I personally feel that there’s something more about you. I hope you’ll consider our offer.”

Seiya sighed and stood up.

“Are you leaving?”

“Yeah. Problem with that?”

“Please give it some thought.”

“The answer is obvious. No.”

Within only two weeks, what could he possibly achieve as manager? Probably just the preparation for closure.

As Seiya was walking down the hallway, Isuzu called out, “Even if I was asking sincerely?”

“Since when were you ‘sincere’?”

“We even gave you a magical power.”

“I didn’t ask for it in the first place. Don’t worry, I won’t use it maliciously; maybe just as a pastime for my train rides.”

Seiya was serious when he said he didn’t need the power. After all, he was able to make that estimation all by himself.

“You’re our last hope, Kanie-kun. Please save our theme park!”

“Declined.”

Seiya pressed the button for the elevator and turned around.

“Just hurry up and close the park already. Retrench the staff and use the remaining funds to start a croquette business. That’s the best action to take.”

The elevator arrived.

“Wait, please just see Latifa-sama once more.”

An image of Latifa struck his mind. Her gentle smile concealed much sadness. He recalled the aroma of the tea he drank, and his heart ached a little.

“Don’t make me repeat myself. A no is a no.”

The underground passageway was at floor B2. He pressed the ‘close’ button. The elevator doors closed, separating the two of them.

Seiya couldn’t say he felt very good about rejecting a request made out of desperation.



He carried his heavy footsteps through the passageway and arrived at the exit. After returning the security pass and signing the log book, he left the park.

*Let's see now...Where was the bus stop again?*

As he scanned his surroundings, he saw a man standing in front of the sign for the bus stop. Upon closer inspection, the man was Kurisu Takaya from Amagi Development. The other two weren't there. Kurisu must have dismissed them right after the meeting.

He held his phone in one hand and smoked a cigarette. His necktie was loosened, and he was gazing far into the distance. Certainly an appearance of a typical businessman.

Seiya didn't want to get too close, but the bus stop was right next to him. Their eyes made contact, and after giving a simple gesture of respect, Seiya stood at the other side.

According to the bus schedule, the next bus would come in about 5 minutes. After a while, he began to realize that Kurisu was looking at him. He tried to feign ignorance, but ended up asking out of irritation, "What do you want?"

"Nothing...hmm..."

Kurisu gave a puzzled expression.

"Have we met before? Or am I just imagining things?"

"...You must be mistaken."

"Ah, I don't think we've met, but I've certainly seen you before. Oh right, you're Kodama Seiya, the prodigy who mysteriously disappeared about 5 years back!"

"..."

Seiya was becoming frustrated. He had grown a lot since elementary school, so he should have looked very different. He'd gotten taller, his hairstyle had changed and his gaze had become demonic.

Naturally, his voice had broken and his home had since shifted from the notable Meguro ward to the commuter town of Amagi. His family name had also changed.

Despite all that, there were apparently people out there who were still able to discern his identity. Ever since he entered high school, there were only about 3 or 4 people who had discovered who he was, like the old lady from the bento shop and the cashier at the supermarket. However, not a single student in school had noticed, and for some reason, only elderly ladies were able to tell. Perhaps they had acquired the ability to predict how a child's face would look as an adult based on their own experience with children?

Of course, Kurisu was the first male who had ever took notice of this.

"You've got the wrong person," Seiya retorted.

Kurisu tilted his head, "No, there's no mistaking it. You're definitely Kodama Seiya. I already had a gut feeling when I saw you in the conference room earlier. Guess I was right."

"Like I said, you're mistaken."

Despite Seiya's efforts, Kurisu remained firm in his stance. Seeing how any further attempt to refute him would only make him sound stupid, Seiya decided to leave it at that.

"Even if I were, what business do you have with an ex-talent, anyway?"

"Nothing. It just piqued my interest, that's all."

"If that's the case, then leave me alone."

"All right, my bad. But well...you're a student, right? What are you doing in a place like this?"

"Who knows? I could ask you the same question."

Even though Seiya's comment had probably come off pretty rude, Kurisu was not in the least bit agitated.

“Those people wanted me to take a look around the place. Although they asked me to work for them, I’ve already refused because I want to lead a peaceful life. So could you please leave me alone?”

Nothing he mentioned was a lie. He couldn’t care less about that dying theme park, and only God knew what was going to happen to Isuzu and Latifa. All he wanted now was to get back home and enjoy his favorite game.

The bus for Amagi Station was coming.

“I suppose you have your own matters at hand. At any rate, let me give you a word of advice. Be careful of who you mingle with. Stick around with losers, and you’ll end up becoming one.”

“Why, thank you.”

He couldn’t help but refute Kurisu’s insult, and continued, “...Wise words coming from one assigned to handle this hopeless theme park, I see. I’ll keep that in mind.”

“Look who’s talking.”

Unexpectedly, Kurisu smiled with a complex expression different from before.

The bus stopped right in front of him, and its doors opened. Kurisu boarded the bus, but Seiya remained still.

“Kanie-kun...right? Aren’t you boarding?”

“I’ll wait for the next one so I won’t have to see your face the whole trip back.”

“My, my, did I make you upset? See you, then.”

The doors closed, and the bus departed, slowly fading from his view.

Seeing that Kurisu Takaya’s bus had disappeared from sight, Seiya checked the bus schedule once again. The next bus would arrive in 10 minutes. Such an interval was unacceptable, no matter how pathetic the theme park was.



After all, this was still Tokyo, not a countryside. But then again, considering the park's visitor count, this pace might be fine.

Seiya walked around in search of a place to sit. There was nothing, not even a bench for the elderly and children who spent the whole day walking. One could only stand and wait.

*Wait a minute—*

He found a handcrafted bench near the premises of the theme park, more than 20 meters from the bus stop.

*Ah, I get it...*

The bus stop was considered to be a property of the government. There was no way to install benches without their permission. So they had to build it on their own land which was farther away.

Seiya walked to it and sat down. The bench creaked in agony and felt like cheap DIY furniture. Its corners were properly buffered, probably to prevent children from getting hurt. There was an awful painting of the mascots on the wall behind it that had to have been placed there in consideration for kids who were bored of waiting.

*If you have the time to do this, then why don't you devote it to the actual park instead...*

Despite that, Seiya couldn't help but feel that this was the least they could do to please their guests, just like the croquettes. That filthy Kurisu Takaya mentioned earlier that the park's guests were all idiots. And just moments ago, he said that hanging out with losers would make Seiya one as well.

Indeed, Seiya could not deny it. That man spoke from business experience. Of course, normally he'd just laugh it off as a joke. The cast of Amaburi had failed to put in the effort, so they were biting the bullet now. No matter how one looked at it, it was their fault.

*So why am I getting so worked up over petty matters like this? And why am I so pissed at Kurisu's insults? Am I just intolerant of the arrogance of others?*

*Amaburi will fall in 2 weeks. That's a given. However, is it really the end? Is there something that I can do about it?*

Thoughts swarmed inside his head, and 10 minutes passed quickly. The next bus had arrived, and several people began boarding. If he made a dash now, he would be able to make it.

But Seiya did not do so.

He turned his back against the bus, and headed for the staff entrance once again.

**Chapter 2: The Mascots' Customer Service Sucks!**

## Part 5

Meanwhile in Amaburi, an announcement was made at the end of the day asking the “‘real cast members’ to assemble at the sky garden.”

The ‘real cast’ referred to the staff members who came from Maple Land. Moffle was one of them, just like Macaron and Tiramie. Of course, Isuzu as well. The people of the land were simply referred to as the ‘cast’.

*So the time has finally come—* Moffle thought to himself while finishing the cleanup.

Latifa and Isuzu had important news to break. Bad news, in fact. Moffle met up with Macaron, the sheep-like mascot, on the way there. Among the mascots, he had been friends with Moffle for the longest.

“Why hello there, ‘fairy of sweets’,” said Macaron.

“Same to you, ‘fairy of music’.”

The two of them greeted each other with unbecoming nuances.

Though Moffle was the fairy of sweets, he did not like sweet things. Instead, he preferred things like salami and dried cuttlefish. As a result, he was often teased because those were appetizers rather than snacks.

On the other hand, Macaron was known as the fairy of music, but he couldn’t care less about children’s tunes. He was a fan of funk and rap, especially American ‘gangsta’ music that propagated violence and sexism. His favorite verses depicted rival gangs shooting at each other and lewd acts done to hot chicks.

“You were drunk as hell last night. Are you alright, *ron?*”

“Not really, I don’t have any memory of what happened after we left the bar, *fumo...*”



Last night, Moffle went for a drink with Macaron and Tiramie and ended up getting drunk. At the beginning, all he spouted were nonsensical remarks, but as it got worse, he became all gloomy and lamented about the future of the theme park.

The next morning he found himself in his kitchen with no recollection of what happened. For some reason, it appeared that he had cold spaghetti all over him, and had fallen flat on the floor the night before. While enduring a hangover and preparing for work, he found an empty carbonara packet in his mailbox. He didn't know where the contents had gone, though he guessed they probably went into his stomach. At any rate, it had been awhile since he had been this drunk.

"Moffle, you were talking a lot about Latifa last night, *ron*."

"I see, *fumo*."

"You also mentioned something about a curse, and something about a kid that was selected by the oracle...you even cried at the end."

"*Mofu*. Seriously?"

"Dead serious."

"I must have caused a lot of trouble for you guys. Please forget what I said, *fumo*."

Macaron patted his back.

"Moffle, we'll never despise you, *ron*. You never say bad things about others. Even when you were drunk, all you did was praise people."

"Is...that so, *fumo*?"

"Even the kid; you said that he had a lot of guts."

"That was...definitely not a compliment for that weakling, *fumo*."

"Whatever you say, *ron*."

Macaron skipped happily into the elevator. There were other 'real' cast members boarding the elevator as well, and it filled up quickly.

"Erm...Moffle-san."

A girl with butterfly wings and a slightly revealing costume called out to him in a soft voice.

She was Muse, one of the fairies that performed for the musical at Sorcerers' Hill. She was one of the younger fairies, but despite that, she always did her best.

"What's up, *fumo*?"

"It's pretty rare for them to call for an assembly, don't you think? Could this be...bad news?"

Everyone in the elevator stayed silent, waiting for a reply. Moffle was a senior and was a relative of Latifa, the royalty of Maple Land. His answer had the potential to affect everyone's mood.

Moffle glanced at Macaron for help. Though Macaron already knew the answer, he grimaced, hinting that it was "up to Moffle".

"...I'm not sure myself, *fumo*."

"I-Is that so...but..."

"But you're probably right."

As he spoke, the elevator had reached the top floor and the doors opened. The 'real' cast members walked out and separated from there.

Seeing the worried looks on their faces, Macaron waited for everyone else to put some distance between them before whispering, "Moffle, that's not how you do it, *ron*."

"Says the one who pushed the responsibility onto me, *fumo*."

"I know but...they were counting on you, *ron*. You shouldn't have been so direct."

“No matter how much I sugarcoat it, the truth remains unchanged, *fumo*.”

“Well...that’s true...”

The two of them entered the sky garden. The scenery was as beautiful as ever. Most of the ‘real’ cast members had already gathered, and were discussing among themselves with unease. In addition to Maple Land, there were members from other magical realms present.

Moffle and Macaron found a spot at a corner of the garden and waited for the announcement. The Pomeranian mascot arrived and sat beside them.

“What’s up, *mi*! Bad news, I guess?”

“Probably, *ron*. Well, the park’s 30 years old now; we did our best.”

“It’s 29, not 30, *fumo*...” Moffle said in melancholy.

Amaburi, which was built out of extra funds from the Showa era’s economic bubble, was supposed to turn 30 soon. Of course, that had become nothing more than an unattainable dream now.

“Attention! Attention!” A girl’s voice reverberated throughout the garden.

Isuzu, wearing the park’s uniform, spoke from the terrace as she looked at everyone.

“Honorable cast of Amagi Brilliant Park, the First Princess of Maple Land and appointed manager, Her Highness Latifa Fleuranza, will now address you. Please pay attention!”

The announcement carried a solemn atmosphere, and if there were soldiers, they’d be standing at attention by now. But the real cast members around Moffle were still talking among themselves in apathy.

*Enough with that arrogant attitude already...*

*Just cut to the chase...*



*It's definitely about Amaburi's closure, isn't it...?*

There were grumbles and whispers everywhere. It was obvious that those remarks were directed towards Isuzu.

A year ago, Isuzu was sent from the imperial regiment to aid the theme park. However, she failed to deliver any tangible results. While it was true that she was an elite among the royal guards, she was only a soldier and thus lacked the necessary business management skills and didn't understand the entertainment industry.

She was strict about the cast's conduct and used her weapon to threaten uncooperative members. Along with that, she never backed down from their investors. An outstanding officer for sure, but even so, her methods couldn't save the park. Although Isuzu was serious in fulfilling her duties, her overbearing attitude garnered unhappiness amongst the cast members. People had their own strengths and weaknesses, and Isuzu was simply not cut out for the job.

"The cast have all gathered, Your Highness. Please, grace them with your words!"

Her voice contained vigor, different from her usual expressionless tone. To be fair, she was a royal guard, so someone like Moffle, an ex-soldier, could never have projected as majestically as she had.

Latifa appeared from within the terrace.

For Moffle, seeing her frail physique and dainty dress was painful enough to make him want to bear the burden in her stead.

Isuzu extended her hand and guided her. After balancing herself, Latifa spoke.

"Thank you for coming, everyone."

Her tone was bright and cheery, yet everyone knew that her next few words would be just the opposite.

"I regret to inform you all that I have bad news for everyone. Within the next two weeks, Amagi Brilliant Park will close."

Sighs of concession and mumbles could be heard everywhere.

“The reason is that we didn’t have enough guests visit the park this year. According to the contract, the rights to the park and land will be given to Amagi Development in the event that we fail to meet the annual guest quota for 5 consecutive years.”

The crowd fell silent. Of course, this was something everyone knew by now.

“The time has come. We have determined that it is impossible to gather enough visitors within this short a timeframe. As such...”

Latifa hesitated for a moment.

“...We will soon part ways with the park. I’ll do my best to find each of you a new place to work. Although there might be difficulties along the way...”

“Difficulties? Difficulties, *pi!*?” One of the ‘real’ cast members raised his voice. In turn, all eyes were on him.

The one who shouted was Wanipi, a reptilian mascot who worked in an area next to Sorcerers’ Hill named ‘Wild Valley’. Wanipi was not as adorable as Moffle and co., and his tongue stuck out from his elongated beak. His comical personality and scary face made him primarily popular among tourists.

“Latifa-sama! Difficulties, you say? I have close to zero popularity, *pi!* How can I build a reputation anywhere else!?”

“We don’t know for sure. If you work hard enough...”

“It’s no use, *pi!*”

Wanipi’s words spelled agony.

“I’ll just end up selling tissues at a train station, *pi!* And as people forget about me, I’ll lose animus and disappear, *pi!*”

Other people were getting worried as well, for they harbored the same concern as Wanipi. When the time came that people forgot about the fairies, they would be unable to return to Maple Land and eventually vanish.

“It’s not just me, *pi*! Everyone...everyone will disappear! We won’t even be able to go back home to enjoy our lives... It’s the end, we’re all doomed, *pi*!”

“Pull yourself together, *fumo*,” Moffle interrupted.

“Moffle...but...”

“How many years has it been since you came here?”

“T-Twelve years, *pi*.”

“If so, you’ve had plenty of chances, *fumo*. You failed to seize the opportunity to build a stable fan base when you were popular, so there’s no point in crying over spilt milk, *fumo*.”

“But...but...”

“Don’t worry about it, *fumo*. I’ll sell tissues with you. You’ve been on stage several times, haven’t you? If you work hard, there’s still a chance that you’ll become popular among the kids, *fumo*!”

Wanipi relaxed his shoulders, but disdainfully replied, “A chance...to be popular?”

“What about it?”

“Easy for you to say; you’re the park’s lead mascot, *pi*! With all that recognition, you’d have no problems finding a new theme park, *pi*!”

“Cut it out, *fumo*! I—”

“I know that you’re good friends with Mackey, the star of Dejima Land! You’d have no problems with connections like that!”

Mackey was a top-rated mascot in Dejima Land that everyone knew about, and one who wouldn’t be out of place at the Oscars in Hollywood.

"I said cut it out, *fumo*...!"

Moffle grabbed his scruff, controlling his own anger. Wanipi murmured in fear.

"Listen up. I'm no friend of Mackey; he's just an old acquaintance. There's no way I'm going to ask him for help, *fumo*! The next time you insult me, I'll be sure to pluck out your scales one at a time until you apologize, *fumo*!"

"If that's the case then why don't you...ouch! It hurts, *pi*! I'm sorry, I'm sorry, *pi*!"

"Stop it, the two of you!"

Seeing that Moffle hurt Wanipi, who was writhing in pain, Macaron pulled the two of them apart.

"Quit embarrassing yourselves in front of Latifa-sama! You two should know that she's the one who's suffering the most, *ron*!"

Hearing that, Moffle turned around. There Latifa stood, downcast in silence. Despite knowing that Latifa was in the most pain, Moffle gave into anger and stirred up a commotion.

"...I'm really sorry, *fumo*."

"It's okay..."

Latifa gave a sorrowful smile, and gestured for Isuzu to lower her musket. It appeared that she was about to fire at the two of them for making a scene.

"But I don't understand, *mi*."

Tiramie, who had remained silent until now, spoke up.

"Why would you go through all this trouble just to tell us that?"

Latifa's shoulders stiffened in response.

"That's because today...the oracle's chosen candidate has officially declined our request for help."



“The candidate...for the manager?”

“Yes. We asked for help as sincerely as we could, but—”

“The fault lies with me,” Isuzu added before Latifa could continue. “Again, I overstepped my boundaries as a royal guard and used too much force when I approached the candidate. And probably because of that, he got angry and went home.”

*It figures...*

Everyone, including Moffle, made a similar remark. That was Isuzu’s personality, after all. Nonetheless, the oracle’s chosen one was nothing more than an ordinary human being. There was no way he could have done anything to save this park.

“I do not know if this was for better or worse. But regardless, he was the oracle’s final candidate, and now we’ve exhausted all our options.”

Isuzu sighed and bowed her head.

“It has finally come to this. I’m sorry for letting you down, everyone...”

What Isuzu did was admirable, but at the same time, everyone had thought that a mere human being would not be able to solve the problem. Rumors on what kind of person the candidate was had also spread.

However, the truth was that the oracle’s chosen one was nothing more than an ordinary high school student without even any experience in business. There was really nothing he could have done.

“I regret to say this, but...” Latifa continued, “Ever since moving here, we’ve been facing a shortage in funds. There is nothing more I can offer apart from a sincere apology.”

Nobody was blaming her for this. The atmosphere around the sky garden became grim. Having lost all hope, the real cast members could only accept their tragic fate. Everyone was either lowering their heads, looking up at the sky or weeping.

“I’m sorry, everyone... I’m really sorry...”

With that, Latifa ended her announcement.

No matter how depressed they felt or how much they lamented, their fate would not change. Everyone realized that fact, and as they were about to dismiss themselves—

“Isn’t it too early for an apology?” shouted a stranger.

The one who just entered the sky garden was none other than Kanie Seiya.

**Chapter 2: The Mascots' Customer Service Sucks!**

## Part 6

Truth be told, Seiya was having a dilemma when he arrived at the garden.

*Is there anything that I can do? No, I'm being too rash. I should stop pretending to be a hero and go home.*

After facing his own internal arguments, Seiya caved in to himself and ended up listening to the whole conversation in the shadows.

But he might as well have gone back home, for nobody had taken notice of his presence. Despite that, Seiya walked up to the grieving crowd. Even though he didn't know what his own intentions were, he stepped out anyway, accepting the tremendous responsibility he would be bearing in *her* stead.

There was only one reason for this; just one: he couldn't stand seeing the young girl about to cry in front of everyone.

*Man, this isn't my thing at all*, Seiya thought, as he raised his voice.

"How pathetic! If you're going to sigh like that, do that after the park closes!"

He was well aware of the attention he would receive when he said that. There were all sorts of creatures around him, including those with fur, scales, feathers, and frightening fangs, along with those that did not resemble human beings at all apart from their costumes. Everyone had his or her eyes on Seiya.

"Kanie-kun...?"

Isuzu's eyes widened as she looked down from the terrace. Along with that, Latifa stood beside her and gave a little sigh of relief.

"Who's that, *mi*? He's just a normal person, but why is he here?" said the Pomeranian mascot and fairy of flowers, Tiramie.





“So this is the oracle’s chosen one, *ron*? Didn’t he go home? What’s the meaning of this?” added Macaron, the sheep-like mascot and fairy of music.

Having scanned through the pamphlet, Seiya had a good grasp of who each of them were based on their appearances. Along with that, he had accepted the fact that these were not suit actors, but actual cast members from the realm of magic. Considering all the absurd things that had happened so far, it was hard to believe that these were ordinary people.

It appeared Isuzu had meant it when she said there was “nobody inside”. Indeed, there were no humans within these mascots. Each and every one of them were legitimate fairies sent from the realm of magic.

Putting this matter aside, there was something Seiya had to do. But as he was heading towards the terrace, somebody stood in his path. He was Moffle, the fairy of sweets and the mascot of the attraction he visited. Moffle glared at Seiya in suspicion. The scenario somewhat reminded him of a showdown scene in a western cowboy flick.

“Hey, kid, why are you here, *fumo*?”

*So this guy can speak too? Back then, all he could say was “mofu”.*

“Out of my way. I want to speak with her.”

“There’s nothing to talk about, *fumo*. The exit’s behind you.”

“I can’t do that. I’ve already decided to help her out.”

Moffle scowled and looked at Seiya with a pair of dangerous eyes.

“This is our problem, *fumo*. We don’t need help from people of the land like you.”

“Oh yeah? Doing just fine on your own, huh?”

“What...?”

Seiya gave a condescending look at everyone in the garden.

“Just take a look! You people couldn’t do anything! You guys couldn’t gather enough visitors and rake in enough cash, and now you’re on the verge of losing the entire park. *This* is what happened! Still denying your failures and saying that you ‘don’t need help’? ...The guy from Amagi Development said something interesting today. Wanna hear it?”

Seiya cleared his throat.

““Your guests are all idiots!”“

The mood among them darkened.

“You’re damn right they are! There’s no thrill and excitement here; the experience isn’t even worth any space in a diary! Only fools incapable of logic would bother to come here, anyway. Even I can’t deny that!”

The heat of anger could be felt within the garden; silent, yet deadly.

“And what did I see when I stepped in here? Staff members mourning their own downfall! Sure, only idiots would pay you people any money!”

“If that’s all you’re going to say...”

Moffle was shaking in anger.

“Then keep quiet, human. What do you know about our park...?”

“I can tell just by spending a day here! You’re all incompetent losers!”

“How dare you, I’ll shut that foul mouth of yours—”

Moffle lunged at him, but Latifa shouted, “Please stop this!”

With that, Moffle stopped in his tracks.

“*Mofu.....*”

“Moffle-san. I am the one who first invited Kanie Seiya-sama here. On top of Isuzu’s mistake, are you intending to embarrass me once more despite his kindness in coming back to the garden?”

“No...I didn’t mean to...”

Moffle reluctantly gave way.

“I understand, *fumo*. You may pass.”

Still slightly surprised by Latifa’s continued resolve, Seiya walked past Moffle and climbed the stairs up to the terrace.

From behind, Macaron nudged Moffle, asking, “why were you using the word ‘human’ so derogatorily despite frequenting the bars at the station?”

Moffle retorted with a “keep quiet, *fumo*.”

“I sincerely apologize on behalf of everyone,” Latifa said as Seiya reached the terrace.

“Don’t worry about it...”

“I always believed that you’d return.”

She spoke in a gentle voice.

“Ah, yeah...”

Seiya stuttered, as he was at a sudden loss for words. Normally, he’d be able to speak in a shameless and insolent manner, but for some reason he’d always waver when speaking with Latifa.

“Also, Kanie-kun. Am I right to say you’ve changed your mind?” asked Isuzu.

Seiya made up his mind and replied, “I guess you could say that...”

However, seeing how he’d stirred up a commotion below, he couldn’t allow it to end on a low note like that.

“It seems I’ve yet to introduce myself. I’m Kanie Seiya!”

He cupped his ears in a dramatic manner, and pretended to be listening to the crowd.

“I see...I can hear all your thoughts from here. First off, you guys hate me, don’t you?”

Of course, he wasn’t using any special ability. This was something even the most insensitive of people could tell just by looking at the stares, full of killing intent.

“It’s not just hatred I’m getting, but other things like ‘insolent brat’, ‘who on earth are you?’, ‘entrust the park to you?’, and ‘how can you save the park in two weeks?’ as well. Oh wait, there’s more. ‘Tch, this sucks! He’s taken away our idol, Latifa-sama!’”

Seiya watched them and smirked. Nobody was laughing.

“It hurts, doesn’t it? Not that it matters, I won’t be entertaining any of your pleas. I’m gonna be the authoritarian here!”

He slammed his fist on the handrails.

“If you’re against me, then quit! You’re all going to follow my orders without question! Since this place’s going down anyway, might as well do it my way! But one thing’s for sure, I’ll show it to all of you...this ‘insolent brat’ here will create a miracle in 2 weeks. In other words, I’ll bring in 100,000 visitors!”

For a brief moment, the park became silent. Then, it started to sizzle with commotion. A good half of the people were mocking him, complaining about the treatment they were going to get, whereas others were contemplating his promises in doubt.

*Come on, any person will do. Someone just say something to me! Quit wasting time! The best possible question I could get is—*

“Erm...why are you so confident about this?”

*That’s it!*

The one who tossed the question at him was a girl in a fantasy-like dress. If memory served, she was Muse, the fairy of water and a performer for the musical.



“The oracle’s on my side, and I’ve got a plan. I’m certain this will work out, and it’s going to get busy for you guys. Prepare yourselves!”

The commotion became larger. More people were starting to doubt his words. From the conversations among them, most of their words were “the oracle”, “no way”, and “could it be?”

He didn’t care about the rest. He was able to bring it this far; that in itself was an achievement.

“I’ll leave the details for next time. Tomorrow’s shift will be as per usual, but don’t be late! You hear that!?”

Seiya glanced at Isuzu. After recovering from a brief shock, she shouted, “Dismissed!”

\*

After the cast members left, only three people remained: Seiya, Isuzu, and Latifa. Moffle had walked out together with the others, pretending to have heard nothing of it.

“Moffle must be troubled,” Isuzu muttered. “Is that rat always like this?”

“No. He’s usually the mediator—what the army would call a non-commissioned officer. He’s also pretty popular.”

“I get it, so he’s one of those grumpy drill sergeants, huh...”

“That was why I hooked you up with him on Sunday.”

If that were the case, it would be tough to manage the cast without his help. There was a need for someone who could mix well with the rest that would help to make the group work. Someone like a supervisor at an office or a leader among the part-timers would be invaluable.

“Uncl-...I mean Moffle has a lot of pride. Even if you were the oracle’s chosen one, he would probably refuse to help you in all ways,” Latifa said in a weak tone.

"I understand. An outsider like me is bound to be frowned upon."

"I hope you're prepared for the consequences of your actions...?"

It was clear what Isuzu was referring to. Seemingly in agreement, Latifa added, "Kanie-sama, you made some pretty hurtful remarks just now. Could it be that..."

"Yeah, it was an act. I'm aggravating them on purpose."

"On purpose...you say?"

Seiya felt bad, so he scratched his head and explained.

"I mentioned that their guests are idiots, didn't I? If they were to respond in apathy, they would have been losers beyond help and I'd leave on the spot. But they didn't; on the contrary, the cast members were really mad."

"...What does that mean?"

"To put it simply, if they are angry, then there's hope."

"Some occupations are meant to bring happiness to their customers, like singer, artist, and chef. The professionals in these fields need to be able to accept mockery from others. Well, there might be pros who can't, but the ones to stay the longest are always those who can. And there's a certain type of insult that even these people cannot stand. Do you know what I'm referring to?"

"...Insults to their customers."

"That's right. If they were to get laughed at because of their own weakness, they could ignore it. However, an insult to the customers who enjoyed their service is a completely different thing, akin to having a precious friend or family member being made fun of. It's a strange mentality."

"..."

"In any case, the fact that they're angry when their guests are insulted means that they still treat their jobs seriously. And that in turn means there's still hope."

"I see. I'll keep that in mind."

Latifa's voice quivered slightly.

*Did she really understand what I just said?* Seiya wondered.

"So, will you lend us your strength?" Isuzu confirmed.

Having come to this theme park populated by mascots like those and getting asked to be a manager despite still being a student had already made Seiya lose his sense of reality. Furthermore, he had just professed his ability to tame what seemed like a hideout for beasts. There was no turning back now.

"I'll accept your request. But only for 2 weeks."

"2 weeks...?"

"I'm a high school student, after all. Studying's my main job."

He had his games as well. Seiya was not going to allow this troublesome issue to steal any more of his precious time. The final tests were coming soon, and spring break would come right after. He wanted to spend his whole break playing games, so he probably wouldn't have the time to work.

"Studies, huh?"

Isuzu shifted her gaze away in suspicion, and Seiya continued.

"Anyway, all you need is to overcome this problem, right? This park's fate will be decided in two weeks. Whatever the outcome might be, my job ends there. Deal?"

"...Alright. We are eternally grateful." Latifa smiled.

"You don't need to be so thankful about this," Seiya sighed deeply and sat on a nearby garden chair.

For some reason he suddenly felt awfully tired. He wondered to himself what he should say that to them, and spoke.

“Just so you know, my grades are top notch and my intellect is superior. On top of that, I am good-looking and possess expertise in many fields.”

“Why are you spewing out arrogance all of a sudden?” Isuzu kneaded her eyebrows.

“...Keep quiet and listen. ...And then, perhaps due to the oracle, my strange powers or simply through fate, I ended up getting caught up in this. It might seem like I can create a miracle, but unfortunately the target of 100,000 visitors in 2 weeks is hard to achieve.”

Just by looking at the crowd yesterday, Seiya had a good idea of the visitor count, which was about 2,500 to 3,500, since it was a Sunday and definitely the peak of the season, which was around early March. There would be significantly fewer visitors during weekdays.

Assuming they'd get 1,500 visitors every weekday, that would only amount to 21,000 in total. The aim was 100,000, yet his estimates were that low.

It was thus unsurprising that the cast members were so desperate.

“In other words?”

“I'll do what I can, but chances are the outcome will not change. What I want to say is that you guys should prepare for the worst.”

“Then, what about the things you said to them...?”

“That was obviously a lie. Of course, I don't have any secret strategy in mind either.”

Following that, Seiya managed a cunning smile.

“...”

“I don't have a choice. If I'm to make something happen, I need to start by getting their hopes up.”



Isuzu became sullen. However, Latifa was still smiling and gazing emptily at a distance.

“I understand. But Kanie-sama, I believe you’ll create a miracle for us.”

Seiya was stunned. Could it be that she actually understood the whole situation?

“Hmph, are you saying that because I’m the chosen one?”

“No. The oracle does not guide far. Nobody knows what is going to happen in the near future.”

“Then why are you able to say that?”

“I simply know it, just like how I knew you’d come back for us. I am sure you’ll save us with your miracle.”

*Plain ridiculous. I’m not so useless to have to rely on things like miracles.*

Seiya wanted to click his tongue in disapproval. Yet for some reason, he couldn’t bring himself to do it.

\*

Seiya began work that very night.

He’d given up on going home and told Aisu that he’d be “staying out overnight”.

The office Isuzu prepared was on the fourth floor of an old administrative building backstage.

It was a desolate room with many bookshelves, a desk, and a pipe chair. Rather than an office, it felt more like a detective’s room from a mystery film.

“Here are all the documents I talked about,” said Isuzu as she placed stacks of thick documents onto the table. Seiya picked up an accounting document and started to focus on it.

“Okay.”

“Is there anything else you need?”

“No.”

“Should you ever feel like taking a rest—”

“There should be a sofa down in the lobby outside. Leave a blanket there, would you?”

After saying that, Seiya went right back to reading the documents. He hoped to understand the park’s situation, the condition of its facilities, and the effectiveness of each attraction and mascot in detail by morning. And hopefully, after doing that, he might be able to devise a strategy.

The visitor count was pretty much as he had guessed. During this fairly cold season in early March, an average of 1,400 guests visited the park every weekday. Extrapolating data from annual reports, he’d be able to squeeze out 25,000 guests at most within 2 weeks.

*That’s nowhere near the 100,000 we need!*

He couldn’t think of a viable plan. Nonetheless, there should be a silver lining hidden somewhere, if he searched hard enough...

Right before Isuzu left the room, she called out, “Kanie-kun.”

“What’s up?”

“...Thank you.”

“Sure.”

He gave an inattentive reply. Being absorbed in the analysis of data, Seiya didn’t even look at her face.



## Chapter 2: The Mascots' Customer Service Sucks!

Intermission: At a family restaurant by the streets of Fuchuu

Moffle, Macaron and Tiramie arrived at a family restaurant named 'Goonies' in town.

There was no way they were in the mood to go drinking at the yakitori bar after attending such a gathering. After having cream croquettes, Qeema, and a meat casserole, respectively, they each sipped on cups of disgusting coffee while wearing gloomy expressions.

"As expected, I can't find many good offers, *mi*."

Tiramie complained as he fiddled with his smartphone. The little Pomeranian had been scrolling intently through the job search site "Moko-Moko Navi".

"Isn't that limited to the capitol, *ron*? Just search throughout the country and you'll probably find something," Macaron said.

"If possible, I wanna work at the capitol, *mi*! I don't wanna move so far away."

"You sure it isn't just because you don't want to leave the chicks whom you've received mail addresses from, *ron*?"

"No way! ...Okay, maybe a little, *mi*."

Tiramie was hopelessly obsessed with girls. It was hard to believe he was worrying about anything else.

"If you search hard enough, there are probably tons of good amusement parks out there, *ron*. There are some that raked in profits after breaking ties with the government."

"Is that so, *mi*? You seem to know a lot about these things, Macaron."

"I know a thing or two about the problems of Japan's economy, *ron*."

“That’s hard to believe, *mi*.”

Macaron took a quick glance at Moffle. He hadn’t spoken a word since that dispute with Seiya earlier at the sky garden. He’d been staring outside the window in misery. Even with the delicious croquettes, he could only manage half of them before placing them down on the table.

Macaron thought of striking up a conversation with him, but couldn’t think of any topic that could lift his mood. The best thing he could do now was to continue his idle chatter with Tiramie.

“Anyway, don’t worry too much about leaving the girls. You can build a new harem elsewhere, *ron*.”

“I suppose. But I really don’t wanna leave Takami’s ass, *mi*.”

“Since when was her ass yours, *ron*?”

“That’s something I wish to make mine, *mi*. I’d definitely wanna puff her.”

‘Puff’ was a word used in Maple Land that referred to a certain action. Details aside, it was, without a doubt, uncouth lingo.

“Oh, and I’m a huge fan of Melody too. I definitely don’t wanna move too far.”

‘Melody’ referred to the soccer team ‘Melody Shibazaki’ that was based at a city beside Amagi. It had recently skyrocketed in popularity after placing well in a tournament last year.

“Come to think of it, the opening match is soon, isn’t it, *ron*? Tiramie, if I get my hands on the tickets, how much are you willing to offer?”

“You’re always like this, *mi*. You also sold tickets to AK48’s live concert to the black market, not to mention Wanipi, at ridiculous prices, didn’t you?”

“That’s just the service charge, *ron*. It’s perfectly legal!”

Right then, Moffle stood up.



"I'm going home, *fumo*."

"Moffle, are you alright, *mi*?"

"I'm not sure myself, *fumo*."

Having placed the payment on the table, Moffle left the restaurant.

**Chapter 3: The Building That Had Been Abandoned For Decades****Part 1**

The next morning (Tuesday), the cast members found a big notice pasted at the staff entrance.

There were 3 main points written:

- Business will be suspended today.
- The cast is to work on the repair and cleanup of their respective stations.
- This suspension shall be effective until visible improvements are seen.

At the bottom of the paper there was the signature of Kanie Seiya, the current acting manager, together with a counter-signature by Latifa Fleuranza.

When Seiya mentioned “the cast”, he was not only referring to the performers, but those in charge of the operations, training, the running of food and ticketing stalls, and the security officers. In essence, everyone working at the park, regardless of whether they came from Maple Land or not, was involved.

“What’s the meaning of this, *fumo*!?” shouted Moffle, who had just arrived for work, when he saw the notice. He turned around to face the security officer.

“Ookuro-san! Ookuro-san! Who’s responsible for this prank!? There’ll be more trouble if we don’t catch the culprit!”

The officer, who was busy spending his morning shift cleaning up the guardroom, said, “Oh hey, Moffle-san. It’s not a prank; Isuzu and the acting manager came to paste it up this morning.”

“Acting...manager? You mean that kid, *fumo*.”

“Yeah. He told me to clean the guardroom until it sparkles, and if I slack off he’ll close the security center. Well, anyway, I’m free so I’ll do it properly.”

“Where’s he now, *fumo*?”

"I believe he's making his rounds around the park. Give me a sec: he just entered your sweet house 3 minutes ago," Ookuro said as he searched through the ID card usage log.

"*Mofu.....!*"

Moffle dashed towards the place. He crossed paths with several familiar faces along the way, but did not have time to greet them.

He got on the underground electric cart and started it up, but the speed of the cart was no faster than a crawl. Realizing he'd get there faster on foot, Moffle hopped out and made a run for it. He arrived at Sorcerer's Hill shortly and entered his everyday workplace, 'Moffle's Sweet House'.

Kanie Seiya was at the entrance hall of the sweet house, alone. He was running his fingers along the decorations by the wall.

"What are you doing, *fumo!*?"

Despite Moffle's shouting, Seiya did not flinch one bit and calmly turned around.

"Didn't think you'd come on time."

"Listen, kid. This is *my* place, *fumo*. Don't just go around touching things around here."

"I didn't notice this last Sunday, but the decorations here are quite something. This certainly doesn't seem like anything that could have been done by the people here. I'd always thought these were made from urethane, but I guess I was wrong. Wait, could this actually be a sculpture?"

"Get out of here, *fumo!*"

Before Moffle could rush and grab hold of him, Seiya stepped away from the wall and began to pace around the entrance hall.

"I formally accepted Latifa's offer to be the acting manager of the park yesterday. Shouldn't I have the freedom to go wherever I want here?"

“And so you chose to come and annoy me, *fumo*?”

“I’m not *that* free. Creating miracles isn’t easy.”

“Don’t tell me you’re still going on about that, *fumo*?” Moffle asked while making piercing eye contact. Seiya shrugged with a grin on his face.

“Anyway, what’s up with that notice back there? You didn’t even inform anyone about this! Throughout Amaburi’s 29 years of history, nothing like this has ever happened!”

“Oh, you’re talking about *that*.”

Seiya raised his gaze above, and narrowed his eyelids at the bright rays from the sunlight.

“I’ve decided to start with the park’s appearance. This place is all dusty and has waste littered everywhere...absolutely atrocious. The park’s cleanup will take a day, at least.”

“That’s not it! The problem is that you didn’t give ample notice prior, *fumo*! How are you going to explain to the guests who took the time off to come here?”

Seiya gave a sullen expression.

“It’s a Tuesday. There shouldn’t be many guests coming anyway.”

“There’ll still be people coming! It’s basic respect for us to open our gates to welcome them, even if it’s just one guest, *fumo*!”

Apart from planned breaks, the cast of Amaburi had worked every day. It was an unspoken rule among businesses. The tradition had continued for 29 years, and breaking it now meant destroying the hard-earned trust they had forged with their guests.

*This kid doesn’t get it. There are many businesses like beauty salons and pubs that only get Tuesdays off. Now these workers won’t be able to take their children here to play.*



“There’s no need for us to show respect to people who are satisfied with coming to this damned place.”

“...How dare you!”

“But well, I get where you’re coming from. I’ve been inspecting your sweet house earlier—”

Seiya stopped in his tracks.

“—It doesn’t look like this place needs any major cleanup. I can tell you’ve been cleaning the area regularly.”

“?”

“In other words, you’ll be free after the morning meeting. The plaza in front of the main gate will be open, so go deal with the unfortunate guests.”

“What...*fumo*?”

“Go juggle some balls or dance or whatever. Let those guests have a good time and let them return home satisfied. That’ll be your task for today.”

Moffle was dumbfounded. There would at the very least be several dozens of guests at the plaza, with displeased ones in the mix as well. How would he go about dealing with them?

“Not too tough, is it? You’re a veteran, aren’t you?”

“*Mofu*...that’s...”

“Can’t do it?”

“Of course I can, *fumo*!” Muffle forced out a spur-of-the-moment answer.

“Splendid. I’ll send some guys over once they’re done with the cleaning. I’m counting on you.”

**Chapter 3: The Building That Had Been Abandoned For Decades****Part 2**

Pretending the face-off with Moffle never happened, Seiya made his way out of 'Moffle's Sweet House'.

*I must admit, that was very well-maintained...*

Seiya wasn't lying when he had said earlier that there was no need for additional cleaning. The attraction wasn't small, yet he'd been diligently cleaning and maintaining the place. Moffle must have decided to do it all by himself, seeing as how there were no plans to hire a maintenance crew.

Seiya had checked Moffle's records at work, and realized that he worked overtime several days a week. He must have been cleaning the place even after hours. He'd always looked down on Moffle's attitude since meeting him for the first time, but it appeared that he was actually serious about his work. The only two problems were his stubborn mindset and unwillingness to cooperate.

But that was only to be expected. To be fair, Seiya was still reluctant to work with Moffle. It was as natural as a baseball team wanting to trade away a foreign player. At any rate, just what was Moffle going to do after receiving such orders? He'd have to observe his skills a little more.

*All right, next up...*

Seiya resisted the urge to yawn, and got on his bicycle parked at the back stage. He had a certain place he wanted to visit before the meeting with the various department heads at 9. As he was looking at a staff map east of the back stage, a cast member called out to him.

"Ah, Kanie-san! Good morning!"

There was still time before the official shift started, so the cast member had yet to change into her work attire.

She was wearing a down jacket and denim pants, and her silver hair was covered with a fur hat. She was like a beauty from Europe, though her smile and bowing were very Japanese.

*Who was she again? I know I've met her a couple of times recently, but I can't seem to remember.*

"Oh, apologies! My name is Muse, a cast member of Aquario."

"Ah."

*I remember now. She was the fairy who asked the question during my inspiring speech. She was wearing a costume with wings on her back yesterday, so I didn't recognize her appearance.*

In other words, Muse was a resident of Maple Land too, though she seemed more like a student preparing for her entrance examinations.

"Good timing. Do you know how can I get to the south section of this park?" Seiya asked while pointing at an empty spot on the map.

"Yes. The southern area is opposite from the primary attractions of the park. You have to cross the footbridge or the underpass to get there. The underpass is currently used as a storage area, so it'll be hard to traverse by bike."

"Guess it's the bridge, then. Got it."

Just when Seiya was about to get on his bike again, Muse stopped him.

"I-I'll show you the way! It's easy to get lost there."

"That'll help, but don't you have work to do?"

"There's still some time left. This way!"

Seiya ended up letting her guide him. Muse had a rather conservative appearance, but she seemed to be an outspoken person. She must have picked up the trait. Aquario was a musical theatre, after all.

Midway, Seiya asked, "How long?"

"Sorry?"

"How long have you been working here?"

"Ah...I-It's only been about a year. I used to work as a back-up dancer at Highlander Fujimi."

Highlander Fujimi was a theme park located at the outskirts of Kanagawa. It is said that its performances were more like the shrieks of faulty machinery rather than singing and dancing. It was ironic that residents of a magical realm led meager lives switching from one job to another. A tragic fate, indeed.

"Hey, Seiya-san. May I ask you a question?" asked Muse.

"Shoot."

"C-Can we really do this? I mean, 100,000 in two weeks..."

"Absolutely," Seiya replied quickly.

Of course, it was a lie, but he couldn't afford to lower the morale of his cast members.

"In fact, I'm heading south to inspect the area. A lot of preparations need to be made, you see."

"Is that so..."

Muse was still a little doubtful, but her voice concealed traces of hope in his answer.

"How was yesterday? Did it turn into a massive gossip session after I left?"

"Of course not... Actually, there were people who were unhappy about your conduct, but everybody understood that you're their only hope, and thought they might as well rely on you."

"I see."



Muse did not seem like the type to hide or twist people's words. There was no need for Seiya to use his ability. In fact, he did not use his ability at all yesterday, not even against Kurisu Takaya from Amagi Development. After all, he only had one attempt, so he should not resort to rash decisions.

But then again, it could have just been his style.

Even for gun-based action games, Seiya was one who would refuse to use powerful weapons. He'd conserve his grenades and rocket launchers, and would make full use of every bullet aiming for critical hits. Of course, spraying was out of the question. As a result, he'd have plenty of leftover ammunition even after defeating the last boss, making his play style somewhat wasteful. Perhaps the conservation of his power could have been a result of his habits...

"Over there."

As she'd said, the footbridge was located at a rather remote location. Seiya pushed his bike up the slope designed for wheelchairs and headed for the southern area.

Even from the height of the bridge, much of the place could not be seen, for an overgrowth of coniferous trees that had grown to unbelievable heights enshrouded the land. And an enormous structure could be seen beyond the foliage, casting a shadow large enough to be mistaken for a hill.

"I take it that this place isn't used anymore?"

"From what I've heard, yes. This was once used as a campsite and athletics square, but it appears that it has since been abandoned."

Although there was pavement leading in, it was filled with cracks and wilted plants. The rotting signboards covered in ivy had the words "Waku-Waku Campsite" and "Gather around! Sportive Square!" left behind. It was certainly unbecoming for these to be referring to the ruins ahead.

"I'm not sure why this place was left behind, either."

“It was once an attempt at expanding the park,” Seiya added, recalling the contents of one of the documents he received from Isuzu.

“An expansion, you say?”

“This park used to be very popular, and yielded staggering profits during the economic bubble spanning from the end of the Showa era to the dawn of the Heisei era. This was the planned location of the expansion of a ‘2nd park’ before their revenue was crippled following the bursting of the bubble.”

“Heh... Wait, don’t tell me...”

“?”

“Don’t tell me you intend to finish its construction!?”

“Huh? In just two weeks?”

Seeing Seiya’s perplexed expression, Muse frantically waved her hands.

“N-No, sorry! It’s just that you said you’d create a miracle, so I thought you were making preparations for something big...”

“You’re mistaken. I don’t know about you guys, but I’m no magician.”

Muse looked down in shame.

“You’re right, Seiya-san. You aren’t from our world. I’m sorry.”

“...? M-Moving on, after the economic decline, they cancelled the expansion. The campsite that was nearly complete didn’t garner much interest from the public, so that too was closed. This area has thus been deserted since then.”

There was only so much Seiya could read overnight, so there were many things that he did not know about. As such, Seiya came here to find out more about this place that he had been interested in. Unfortunately, the things he saw here did not seem helpful in his attempt to save the park.

*But wait—*

After exiting the tunnel of trees, a large structure could be seen. Seiya had thought that it was just a worn-out tanker, seeing its rounded structure. The exterior wall extended high up, with metal pillars densely wrapped in ivy.

“This is...” Muse muttered.

“A stadium, huh?” Seiya continued, looking up at the huge structure. “The one and only building constructed during the expansion.”

“I’ve only seen it from afar and never knew it was a stadium. To think that such a facility was at our park...”

“It seems completely finished, yet has never been used. However, I couldn’t find the reason for them to build this during the expansion from the documents earlier...”

“Because the 2nd park’s theme was set to be sports.”

A different voice could be heard from behind.

Turning around, Sento Isuzu was approaching them, wearing her red uniform. Right after pasting the notices on the gate, she said she had to take a shower and disappeared. Judging by her refreshed appearance, she had to have finished.

“So you’ve been following us all the way?”

“You might not know this, but”—Isuzu caught up with the two and continued—  
“Muse is actually a pretty popular fairy. Seeing her being brought to a secluded area by the acting manager, it is my responsibility to protect her from sexual harassment as the secretary.”

“Quit talking bad about me... H-Hey, don’t point that thing here, it hurts!”

Isuzu pointed her musket at Seiya who exclaimed in fury. Muse jumped in from the side and frantically waved her hands.

“Erm, Isuzu-san! I didn’t particularly mean to...it’s just out of courtesy and...no, Seiya-san is kinda cool but...I followed him here out of mere curiosity.”

“Appreciate your help in defending me, but it’s obvious that I’m cool.”

“Right...”

Ignoring Muse’s awkward expression, Seiya folded his arms.

“Anyway, she’s only following me as a guide, so put down your weapon.”

Following his orders, Isuzu withdrew her musket.

“What a shame...and here I thought I might get a chance to use the bullet ‘Paradise Lost’ on you.”

“The hell is that?”

“One that’ll cause you to permanently lose your ability to reproduce.”

“Don’t try that on anybody!”

“E-Erm, back to the topic, we were discussing the concept of the stadium, weren’t we?” Muse said with a timid voice.

Indeed, they were talking about the motives of building this stadium.

“You’re right, you said the theme of the 2nd park was sports. Why is that?”

“I’m not sure about the details, either. Apparently, the management wanted to differentiate this from the main area, and planned its expansion as a milestone in its development.”

“I see.”

Seiya looked up at the stadium once again.

It did not have weatherproof roofing, but its size was to be reckoned with; it might even be considered top class compared to those in the Kanto region. It was certainly a luxury, even to the management during the economic bubble.

“So why hasn’t this been used during the last 20 years?”



“I heard they weren’t able to obtain permission from Amagi Development and the authorities. Similar to the bus stop, they cited various reasons like safety and fire hazards and disallowed the operation of this place.”

“Ah.”

Seiya recalled their conversation two days back, where Isuzu explained the reason for the inappropriate naming of the bus stops that had caused guests to disembark in mistake. She also mentioned having her request put off due to “various reasons”. With the public authorities interfering with the park’s matters, this stadium was as good as useless.

“To be fair, this stadium is pretty far away from the train station, and transporting the expected capacity of viewers would cause major traffic disruptions.”

“You’re right. If I were the manager back then I would’ve vetoed the construction of this.”

“It was apparent that Amagi Development had set its eyes on using the southern area of this park as a golf course. The construction of this stadium must have been an attempt at resistance.”

Seiya had a good grasp of the troublesome situation the former management was in. Amagi Brilliant Park received its capital through funding from various investors. In other words, Amaburi’s ‘allies’ were several sponsors and a company named ‘Maple Estate Agency’, while its ‘enemy’ was Amagi Development, a large shareholder in the town’s business.

Maple Estate Agency was real estate agency built by the realm of magic to invest in its property throughout the globe, though the origin of their money was dubious. Nonetheless, Maple Estate Agency was considered to represent Maple Land, and expressed strong interest in keeping Amagi Brilliant Park running.

On the other hand, Amagi Development was a third sector organization built by people of the land, obtaining its capital from the most renowned investors in west Tokyo. It was currently the company overseeing a large proportion of the area.

It could be said that Amagi Brilliant Park had a history of being the battleground of the conflict between Maple Estate Agency and Amagi Development. Furthermore, the tension had escalated throughout the 20 years since the economic bubble burst.

It was Maple Estate Agency, who was desperately trying to save the park, against Amagi Development that aimed to destroy it. Presently, Amagi Development was on the winning side of the contract.

“Do you have any business here?” asked Isuzu.

“Not really. Just figured this place might come in handy some time.”

“I see. There isn’t much time left before the meeting, so let’s go.”

**Chapter 3: The Building That Had Been Abandoned For Decades****Part 3**

The meeting among the various departments in Amaburi began at 9 sharp.

Departments such as General Affairs, Accounting, Equipment, Human Resources, Food & Beverage, Security, Planning, and Sales were present along with many others. The area representatives of the park were all present too, with a total staff count of about 25.

A majority of the people assembled today were part of the 'real' cast, Latifa and Isuzu's term for cast members who came from the realm of magic. These included cast members who worked behind the scenes and never got a chance to interact with the guests, along with other members who took all kinds of appearances. Some had body parts of varying proportions, others looked like they came straight out of some TV anime or children's story. Of course human beings were in the mix as well, but it was still a strange spectacle.

Naturally, Moffle was present for the meeting. After all, he held the title of 'cast leader' of Sorcerer's Hill, taking charge of the cast members who entertained the guests in his area.

The representatives must have heard rumors about Seiya, for they were all watching him in suspicion while listening to him speak. However, each of them expressed concern and disagreement when they heard Seiya's decision to grant free entry to the park from the next day.

Free entry.

In order to attract more customers, they needed to make everything free of charge. This included the entry fee for the park and attractions, along with all food and beverages.

"I'm against this, *fumo*," Moffle immediately objected.

“...And why so?”

“We are professionals in our field, *fumo*. We can’t just let guests in for free; that would be an insult to the service we provide.”

“You call *that* customer service?”

Seiya was referring to their first meeting on Sunday. Moffle cleared his throat and faced him.

“...I apologize for my attitude back then, *fumo*. But even so, if we make everything free it’ll be hard to charge them for a return visit.”

“Hmm...I see.”

Needless to say, that was something he could understand.

“Furthermore, how are we going to cover the cost for these two weeks? Our daily expenses are about 3 million yen, so we’ll be down by 42 million. Who’s going to provide that?”

“We’re already in the red anyway. We’ll deal with it when the time comes.”

Hearing Seiya’s unreasonable argument, Moffle gave a disgusted expression.

“That sum is...”

“Our debt will amount to hundreds of millions if the park collapses. We’d only be adding a fraction to that debt anyway, so don’t worry too much.”

“But...”

“If you were a sailor who lost a ship in a shipwreck, clinging onto a plank for dear life, would you care about the quality of the plank or the owner of it?”

“...”

“This park is sinking. We first get it out of the water before worrying about the land. However...”



Seiya could understand Moffle's statement about professionals being unwilling to work for free.

"However...you're right. If you're against it being free, then let's change it a little. The entrance fee shall be 30 yen."

A commotion stirred among the representatives.

"...Why 30 yen, *fumo*?"

"The park will be celebrating its 30th anniversary. There's nothing more befitting than a discount like that, and it should do the trick."

There was a wide range of responses. There were people who understood his motives, and others who scowled in doubt.

"We'll need advertisements out quick. The ones in charge will stay, the rest are to return to their stations. Dismissed."

\*

"I really can't stand him, *fumo*!"

Moffle and gang were heading back to the plaza through the underpass when he vented his anger.

"You heard that? 30 yen, *fumo*! Our services for 30 yen! Unforgivable!"

"Shouting that out won't change anything, *mi*," said Tiramie, whom Moffle had met up with earlier. He was heading for the plaza too.

One of Tiramie's attractions, Tiramie's Music Theatre, was relatively easy to clean, and as such he was also tasked to handle the guests who were denied entry to the park.

"But think of it this way, *mi*. This is the perfect chance to ask for a hottie's mail address for 'giving them a special fee of just 30 yen'."

"You're an idiot if you actually believe that'll work, *fumo*."

“Huh, for all you know you might actually get to ‘puff’ someone, *mi*. It’s only a matter of perseverance and chance! Maybe 1 out of 10 would give me their mail address, and probably 1 out of that 10 would actually meet me. But of course, I’d expect my success rate to be much higher seeing how cute I am, *mi~*”

“I’m not interested in hearing your pick-up tricks, *fumo*. You’re always thinking about ‘puffing’ and nothing else!”

Hearing that, Tiramie scratched his fur and gave a deep sigh.

“That’s the problem, *mi*...a life that does not have ‘puffing’ is no life at all, *mi*...”

“Whatever. Anyway, I’m just gonna say I’m not particularly fond of that guy, *fumo*.”

An entrance fee of 30 yen.

Moffle wasn’t so stingy to fret over the money, but the thought of his efforts being valued at 30 yen made his stomach flip. To be fair, Moffle’s conduct was indeed unacceptable during his first meeting with Seiya. He wanted to see how his reaction would be after hearing the news from Isuzu, and that attitude was something he would never show to an ordinary guest.

Well, they’ve certainly got a bright one, and he must have gotten an idea of Moffle’s feelings by now. Yet Seiya continued with that kind of treatment towards him. Moffle could only think of that as his method of revenge. He wasn’t going to bear the disgust and let Seiya insult his past actions.

“Moffle, I...uhh...what was his name again, *mi*?”

“Kanie Seiya, *fumo*.”

“Ah yes, Kanie-kun. I’m not opposed to his plans. The park will close if we don’t change our strategies anyway, *mi*. Now’s not the time to act all stubborn; we’re literally on our knees begging people to let us ‘puff’ them, *mi*.”

“Cut that vulgar analogy, *fumo*.”

“But there are times when it went well, *mi*.”

“What!?”

“No joke, *mi*. Good for YOU, good for ME. Everything’s PUFFIN’ GOOD, *mi*! This WORLD’s the best, *mi*!”

“Heh, so you’re capitalizing your words now, *fumo*?”

“Yeah! To add emphasis on the crude words, *mi*.”

The two of them entered the underground storage area located right below the plaza. The words ‘EX-10’ were written on its grey wall.

“To think of it, how’s Macaron, *mi*?”

“I doubt he can come today, *fumo*. Cleaning up the ‘Flower Adventure’ is gonna be a real pain, and he’s got a meeting with his lawyer in the evening, *fumo*.”

“Ah... They’re still fighting over child care support fees, *mi*?”

“I heard his ex-wife filed a lawsuit against him for defaulting on some payments last year, *fumo*.”

“That dude’s got it tough, *mi*.”

Macaron was a divorcee with his kids staying with his ex-wife in Maple Land, making it difficult to meet up with them.

“Macaron often looks at pictures of his children, saying he’ll ‘go and see his kids during his next day-off’, *mi*. He’ll speak in a bitter tone as if he was able to see his death flag, *mi*.”

“Don’t worry about it, *fumo*.”

“Why, *mi*?”

“Although he mentions his ‘kid’, his daughter is all grown up, *fumo*. Even if he met her, she’d probably just say ‘Dad, you’re creepy’ or something like that, so I doubt he’d die like that, *fumo*.”

“What a heartbreaking story, *mi*.”

They left the storage and headed up to the back stage. Continuing on they arrived in front of the entrance to the plaza, ‘Entrance Square’.

“We’ll be onstage soon, *fumo*. No more talking.”

“Roger.”

They stood still for a moment and gathered their emotions.

“*Mofu*.”

“*Mi*.”

Mumbling their signature phrases to themselves, they stepped on stage, where the eyes of all their guests were on them. From then on, speaking colloquially was strictly prohibited.

Even though it was 10 minutes before the official opening time, they could already see 3 to 4 groups of couples and families there. All of them were most likely upset after seeing the announcement of closure posted on the gate.

“*Mofu...*”

*I’m really sorry, guys. That kid’s selfishness caused a lot of trouble for everyone, making it impossible for you guys to enjoy our attractions today. At the very least, please let us, the top star cast, entertain you all.*

*Maybe I should begin with juggling? I could start with one ball and slowly add more while dancing at the same time.*

*...Then let’s go!*

“...Shut up!”

“*Mofu!*”

A young kid pushed Moffle from the side with all his might. Moffle tumbled and the balls scattered around him on the stone floor.



“M-Mofu...”

That kick hurt a lot considering it was from a child. The strength used was about that of a parent, or maybe even a gym teacher.

“I wanted to go to Dejima Land, yet I settled for this place! How could you guys do this? Don’t screw with me, stupid rat! Call Mackey here!”

“Ugh...”

The child continued to swear and kick Moffle persistently.

*It hurts, it hurts! Stop it, kiddo! You even demanded that I call Mackey? I’m really gonna kill you. Also, Mackey’s no mascot! He’s just some filthy money face! Anyway, where are your parents? What on earth are they doing?*

“Panja-kun<sup>1</sup>, don’t do that!”

A woman in her mid-twenties with brown hair came, shouting. She must have been the kid’s mother.

“Mo...Mofu...”

“But mom...”

“You don’t know who’s touched that costume! What if we catch some sort of weird virus or something? Like I said, don’t touch that thing.”

“Okay...got it.”

She pulled her son away, and looked down at Moffle, who was sprawled on the floor.

“Listen up, I won’t forgive you if my child catches some disease! You’d better prepare yourself, or I’ll sue you!”

“Mofu...”

---

<sup>1</sup> Panja refers to the white lion from the manga Jungle Emperor.

*I sincerely apologize for causing trouble. We have been careless on our part, and I fully deserve your son's beating. I lack the strength and talent, so please use me as your punching bag.*

*On top of that, your son is called Panja-sama, am I right? What a unique name. He's sure to have setbacks in the future, but in the long run they'll make him a better person. Moffle admires him greatly.*

*It is perfectly understandable for you to worry about your son contracting viruses from this filthy mascot, and I am very sorry for that. So please, hit and scold me to your heart's content.*

"You actually think I'd say that, bitch!?"

Moffle stood up and pushed the woman back.

"Ow! What's this thing's problem? Wait, this thing can speak?"

"Mofu..."

A commotion began among the bystanders. Within 5 seconds of her cries, the husband came walking towards them. The young man who looked like a hipster wore a necklace, glasses with smoked lenses, and had a kinky perm on his hair. As he approached them, the jewelry he wore gave a luxurious jingle. He was what people would call a typical DQN<sup>2</sup>.

"What the hell's goin' on over here?"

"Listen, Takkun! This thing here pushed me over!"

Hearing the woman's blatant lies made Moffle seethe in anger.

"All I did was give that thing a lecture for upsetting Panja-kun, and yet it had the gall to knock me to the ground. Unreasonable, don't you think?"

---

<sup>2</sup> DQN is pronounced as dokyun, which is a derogatory term for delinquents/gangsters.

Completely buying all of his wife's accusations, Takkun turned and glared daggers at Moffle.

"Oh, this stinkin' rat needs to be taught a lesson, huh?"

"I know, right? Using violence against customers, completely ridiculous!"

"Ridiculous, right? YOU HEARD THAT!?"

The husband began raising his voice. He clenched his fist and pointed at Moffle.

"Hey, shithead! Come over here and take off yer costume! Ya know how to show manners to your customers, dontcha?"

"Customers, huh... Customers are gods, they say, *fumo*."

"What's your problem? I told ya to come at me!"

"It might be true that customers are gods, but it is man's responsibility to challenge the unreasonable rules gods make, *fumo*. Even Kratos with his human body declared vengeance and eventually defeated Ares, the god of war."

"The hell ya talkin' bout?"

"Even if customers are gods, there are boundaries that should not be crossed. In other words, this is rebellion against a god, *fumo*. You can strike me with thunder for all I care."

"Huh, so ya ain't comin'? Then stay right there, you hear me? I'mma give you a real good lesson. Move and I'll kill ya."

Takkun raised his fists and lunged at Moffle.

"Stop it, *mi*!"

Tiramie was unable to stop them in time, and Moffle's right paw exploded at Takkun's chin. No, to be exact, it didn't explode. Rather, the strike on his chin was so precise, it sniped the consciousness out of his skull. Just like a puppet that had its strings cut, Takkun toppled over to the ground.

“Woa...ah...”

“I won’t lose to people like you, *fumo*,” Moffle declared to the man who had just regained faint consciousness. “You can just lie there, *fumo*. Lie there and curse your pitiful self for being unable to do anything but watch me deliver punishment to your wife.”

Moffle walked in front of the woman who fell on her buttocks, and picked up the rubber balls used for juggling.

Putting the doubt on whether the balls could inflict any damage aside, it looked like an executioner who had just picked a torture weapon of his choice.

“Ah...a...”

“You can cry all you want, *fumo*. But I’ll teach you the fate that befalls those who make an enemy of Amagi Brilliant Park.”

“Ah—!”

“Prepare yourself, customer!”

Moffle grabbed a rubber ball and pulled his paws back like a slingshot.

“Quit your nonsense, stupid rat!”

Out of the blue, Kanie Seiya appeared from the side and sent Moffle flying with his kick.

\*

Seiya had never thought that mascot to be such an idiot. He now knew Moffle was one who would create a ruckus if he ever loosened his leash.

*Seriously...thank god I decided to check on them.*

Seiya gave his sincerest apologies to the family, but to no avail. In turn, they threatened to sue them or write a blog about the incident. Exhausting all other options, they resorted to Isuzu’s magical bullet ‘Forgotten Realm’.

With that, the family who had their memories of the face-off wiped clean made their way out of the park, unable to understand what had just happened. There were a number of witnesses during the incident, but they had long since vanished from the scene. All they could do was pray that they kept what they saw under wraps.

“Do you usually do that to normal guests as well!?”

Seiya shouted this at Moffle as they retreated to the backstage.

“...Only on rare occasions, *fumo*.”

“Rare occasions? Has this happened before?”

“Yes,” said Isuzu.

Tiramie, who accompanied them to the backstage, added, “Happens once every few years, *mi*. He’s got it tough enduring the abuse from guests, so please forgive him, *mi*.”

“For god’s sake...”

Seiya’s head hurt.

*I never knew of a theme park mascot that hit its guests. What are the police doing?*

“We’d be in deep trouble if not for Isuzu’s magical bullet. Now’s really not the time to gather flak from the people. We’ll sink real quick.”

“So you’re saying I should just keep quiet and let them beat me? Even mascots have their pride, *fumo*!”

“If you consider yourself a professional, then you should feed that pride of yours to the dogs!”

Contrary to Seiya’s expectations, Moffle did not become angrier, but gave a complex emotion instead. His round pupils and facial expression carried grief, reluctance and misery.



“What’s with that face? Did I say something wrong?”

“No, nothing’s wrong, *fumo*,” Moffle sighed.

“Professionals must act professionally no matter how their customers treat them. That’s a given, *fumo*... There’s nothing wrong with that, *fumo*, but—”

“?”

“—The only people who have the right to say that are...no...nevermind, *fumo*.”

Moffle became silent, as if concealing something from him.

Seiya had the sudden urge to use his magical powers, the one-time only ability to listen to the heart of the target. But then again, it would be a waste to use it on such a trivial matter like this. He should save it on the off-chance that something big might happen. So Seiya decided to bank on the chance that he might be able to discover Moffle’s weakness someday.

“...Well, my bad, *fumo*. Guess you should just fire me,” Moffle said, partially regaining his composure.

*This rat sure understands his position.*

Moffle was the lead mascot of Amagi Brilliant Park. He knew that Seiya would have a hard time managing the cast if he were to be fired. He was basically invulnerable.

Isuzu and Tiramie turned their gazes over to Seiya.

*Let’s see now, what’s the best course of action...*

Seiya did an analysis of the current situation, placing priority on the responsibilities he had as the manager. He thought about the incident just now and weighed the risks and benefits of keeping him.

Risk-benefit analysis completed.

“I’ll let you off the hook just this once,” Seiya told Moffle with a suppressed voice. “The next time something like this happens, I’ll definitely fire you. Keep that in mind.”

**Chapter 3: The Building That Had Been Abandoned For Decades**

## Part 4

Moffle and the rest returned onstage and continued to entertain the guests that were spread around the plaza. They began their performances such as juggling and dancing (which were much better than before), and the children were actually having fun.

As Seiya watched them from afar, Isuzu said, "I honestly thought you'd kick him out."

"Why?"

"It's the first day, and you might have lost your authority if you had permitted such behavior."

"He's the cleanup hitter. If we fired him, everyone would need to work a lot harder. Anyway, it was thanks to you that we managed to steer away from trouble."

Hearing that, Isuzu sighed.

"The 'Forgotten Realm' bullets are very precious; it takes about a year to make one. I'm left with only one round."

"Is that so?"

"I'd appreciate if you treat my magical bullets as your family's wealth."

"All right..."

*To think she'd just used her priceless magical bullets for that. Wait, hold on.*

"By the way, Sento... You wanted to try some bullets on me a while ago, right? How much were they?"

"You mean the one that renders you unable to reproduce? I got those from an old 100-yen store in Maple Land. They're about 105 yen with tax."

*That's just...*

"I don't get what determines the value of bullets..."

"I agree that it's too cheap. That's why I wanted to try it..."

"Ah, whatever. What matters is that you saved us back there. I'm indebted to you."

"It's okay. I'm just doing whatever I can to help."

"If you really wanna help, I'm going to have to make you bear it all."

\*

Outside the gates of the castle in Amaburi, Isuzu said, "I didn't think you were serious when you asked me to *bare* it all."

She was standing in the cold winter, wearing a swimsuit that exposed a lot of her skin and outlined her fine chest and buttocks. She held a reluctant expression and her lips were becoming purple from the cold.

"Erm, Kanie-san. It might be a little inappropriate for a mascot to be dressing like this..." said Muse, who stood beside Isuzu, in embarrassment. She was also wearing a swimsuit, and moved her slender legs bashfully.

"Kanie-sama...am I really fit for this?" said Latifa, who was being supported by Isuzu. Likewise, she was also wearing a swimsuit. Despite her frail and delicate figure, Latifa's proportions were perfect, and her skin was so beautiful it seemed transparent.

Readying his smartphone camera, Seiya gave instructions.

"Take a step back. No, that's too much. All right, don't move, Your Highness. Good, now hold up your placards."

Latifa timidly raised her placard that read “30th Anniversary Is Coming!”. The other two did the same, with theirs reading “Everything For 30 Yen” and “Special Service!”, respectively.

“E-Erm, are we really going to use this picture for our advertisement?”

“This sounds like a cheap idea, to be honest.”

“...K-choo!”

Cheap or not, this technique was sure to draw attention. Seiya had his doubts about this, but—

“What we do doesn’t matter. As long as it stands out, it’ll be fine. “

The shutter flicked. The resulting lighting wasn’t perfect, but it was something that could be touched up later. Seiya continued to take more pictures without hesitation.

“Hey, smile a bit. A little more! Don’t give those gloomy expressions as if you were lining up in a slave trading town!”

“We definitely feel that way, though...”

“Sento, you’re the only one not smiling. Your face is still so sullen.”

“But I am smiling...”

The cast members who were cleaning their areas crowded around to watch. It was needless to say that many of them were elated at the sight, but there were others who despised it too. Surely they must have felt their gazes by now.

“Done. Let’s do the video next.”

Latifa and Muse had held their smiles all the way, though Isuzu was unable to do so.

After relentlessly taking pictures of the three, Seiya switched his smartphone to video recording mode.



“Put some energy in your words. Ready, set,”

“Amagi Brilliant Park, everything for 30 yen—”

The three of them weakly voiced out the words, which quickly became out of sync.

“Put more emotion into it. Again! Ready, set,”

“Amagi Brilliant Park! Everything for 30 yen!”

\*

Seiya was initially very hesitant on making Latifa, who seemed to have a frail constitution, take part in this, but thankfully one could not be judged solely on appearances. Finishing the photo shoot, Seiya headed straight back into his office.

He did the photo retouching on a used PC given to him by the general affairs department, and with it he also laid out the details of the 30 yen campaign. Everything was done within 10 minutes. He summoned the head of the public relations department and sent the details and instructions to his email.

By the way, the head of the public relations department was a strange-looking creature who looked like he came from some magical country. The guy named Tricen had a figure similar to the other mascots but resembled a triceratops, and he wore a pair of glasses that made him look witty. His name was strange, but it appeared to be his real name.

“Ooh...that’ll do. We can use that,” Tricen commented after watching the edited video. “Normally amateur videos don’t give much impact because they’re too cliché. However, this is different.”

“Is that so? This was really just a desperate measure, after all.”

“That’s not it, the video is very good. The girls possess cuteness beyond popular idols, and the embarrassment they conceal is simply unbearable. It does not sound overly rehearsed, and overall this is just super moe. I think this Tricen here will stare till he gets a hunched back.”

Tricen gave those disgusting comments in a serious tone.

“Oi...”

“My bad. Anyway, this video is sure to go viral among the mascots.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. Don’t get me wrong, Isuzu and Muse are great, but I think Latifa-sama will be the selling point here. She’s the royalty of Maple Land, after all. Seeing Her Highness’s young and graceful, yet heartrending figure would capture anybody’s heart. Mind if I go to the toilet for a bit?”

“Stay.”

*Is there anyone here who has the slightest bit of decency?*

“The main problem would be this video would not appeal to mothers. In fact, it might actually have an opposite effect...”

“We’ll think of another approach for that.”

“I thought as much. Good job obtaining permission from Moffle-san to use Latifa-sama for the photo shoot, by the way.”

“?”

*What’s he talking about? Why do I have to obtain permission from Moffle?*

“My, you didn’t know? Moffle is Latifa-sama’s—”

The sound of the door being kicked open silenced Tricen mid-sentence.

“Kanie Seiya!!!”

The door flew off and hit the wall on the opposite side, before toppling onto the floor. The one who stepped in, blowing steam from his nose, was none other than Moffle.

“What do you want, rat?”

“I’ll break your neck, *fumoooo!*”

Moffle charged forth, with his paws aimed directly at Seiya. He managed to avoid the strike just in time.

“What’s your problem!?”

“Shut up! How could you go around making Latifa dress in a manner like that? A swimsuit!? An advertisement!? I’ll never permit it, *fumo!*”

Moffle pressed hard on the assault, repeatedly throwing paws at him from left and right.

“You should know very well that Latifa’s not very healthy! How could you mock her by making her wear such erotic clothes in weather like this? Unbelievable, *fumo!*”

“Hey, I didn’t force her to do it. I even told her not to force herself if she didn’t feel like it!”

“Did you actually think she would refuse, *fumo*? That child...that child is very obedient, *fumo*! You’re just taking advantage of her personality!”

Moffle leaped up for another strike, and broke the table in half. Tricen ran about trying to dodge the wooden splinters that shot out.

“*Fumomomomomomo!*”

The attack was followed by what seemed like a thousand punches directed at Seiya.

“Ugh....!”

Not wanting to lose to Moffle, Seiya endured the strikes. They came with such speed and force, Seiya could almost feel the fury and tears coming out from Moffle’s heart.

“Ku...”

*This rat's strength is no joke. Maybe his spirit as a man is something that I need to acknowledge. That's probably one of my duties as an acting manager. The hell I would do that!*

"You filthy rat!"

Seiya returned the punches and kicks that were thrown at him. Moffle bent the upper half of his body to guard, and took the opening to do a rapid one-two punch that went *papan!* Seiya caught his breath and began to think that he was playing into Moffle's hands.

*Damn it...! Those rhythmical motions and that tight guard using his paws...no doubt, this is definitely—*

"The Peek-a-Boo style...!"

It was the killer fighting style Mike Tyson used to demolish countless opponents in his time. Although the new rules that placed emphasis on safety have rendered this style obsolete, small-build fighters who possessed explosive strength could use this to obtain destructive power. Given Moffle's short physique and fighting spirit, only God knew how dangerous of a foe he could be.

Moffle gave an expression that said "Oh? So you know about this technique?"

"Bingo. My master was the renowned trainer Kasu Damato who learned about the art directly from Tyson. I am his last disciple, *fumo*."

*How monk-like. I wonder how many of those disciples there are?*

"Using this style on ordinary people is forbidden, *fumo*. Nonetheless, for the sake of your death penalty, Kanie Seiya, I'll make an exception."

Just like a military tank readying for assault, Moffle appeared right in front of Seiya.

"This is for making Latifa dress so erotically, *fumo!*"

*This is bad. The office is like a boxing ring and I'm cornered. If this continues, I'll lose my chance of escaping and have to bite the bullet...*

"Tch..."

*Is there an opening for escape? No, there's no room on both sides. Wait, there's still chance. Above!*

Aiming at Seiya, who was about to take his chance at a leap of faith, and Moffle, who was about to deliver the punishment, Isuzu fired her magical bullet that inflicted 'the pain of striking one's toe on furniture'.

"Stop with your nonsense," Isuzu ordered, still pointing her musket at the two of them who were writhing in agony. She was wearing her normal park uniform; she must have dashed here right after changing.

"Mo...fu...!"

"Ow...!"

"Please stop the pointless fighting. Also, Lord Moffle. Her Highness accepted the modeling request on her own accord, you know?"

"Mofu...But...but...!"

Moffle wept tears of regret.

"Moreover, Her Highness did not seem reluctant to take on the task, though she said 'it's pretty embarrassing to please young adults by wearing such costumes' with reddened cheeks."

"Ugh..."

"You didn't just try to mimic her, did you?"

*Also, was that really the only thing she said?*

"Those who heard her comments even said that 'since she said that, there's no harm in droooooling over her, right?'"



“What’s with that impression? And that’s not how you spell ‘drool’!”

“Anyway, Her Highness was fully aware of the nature of the task before accepting it; your resistance against this is unjustified, Lord Moffle.”

“*Mofu*... But try not to take Latifa out of the sky garden, *fumo*. She should stay within the boundaries.”

“There shouldn’t be a problem if I accompany her.”

“Fine, *fumo*.”

Moffle gave in.

“Kanie-kun. Moffle stirred up trouble yet another time. Are you going to fire him?”

“...No. This happened in the backstage, so I won’t count it.”

If such a thing happened in front of the guests, he would fire him without hesitation. Thankfully, Moffle only did so in the office, away from the eyes of the public. It got on Seiya’s nerves, but he wasn’t going to kick people out over personal grudges.

“Understood. It’s fine now, so please get back to work, Moffle.”

\*

Another business day had ended.

Although the guests who came today were not able to enjoy the attractions, they were still included in the visitor count. The number was close to their prediction, standing at 1,491.

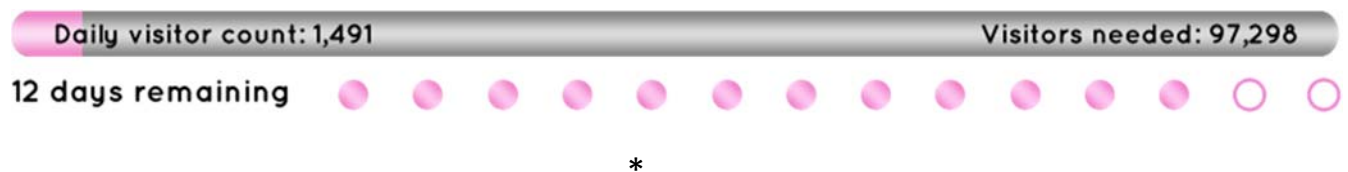
Thanks to Tricen’s efforts, Amagi Brilliant Park was able to announce its 30 yen campaign by dinner time. The video that Moffle was so angry about was also uploaded onto online video sites.

Seiya arrived home after midnight, exhausted, and checked the view count of the advertisement video. Just like Tricen had mentioned, the popularity of the 3 girls could not be looked down upon. The tactics he used could be considered uncouth and cheap, but it certainly worked.

One should never underestimate the power of ecchi. Of course he could have considered other means, but grabbing attention was his goal.

However—

Contrary to his expectations, the video had only garnered 83 hits. It had been 4 hours since the video was uploaded. That was a little too low considering the fact that cast members from Amaburi had watched it out of curiosity as well. Perhaps he had his expectations set too high?



Seiya skipped school the next day.

It was the first day of the 30 yen campaign and Seiya simply couldn't stand being stuck in a lesson while awaiting the results. He arrived at the park first thing in the morning, and after giving instructions in the meeting, Seiya went into the plaza.

The number of visitors was smaller than that of yesterday's. It was Wednesday, a weekday, after all. They couldn't expect the visitor count to skyrocket on a day like this, considering that there were still many who did not know about the 30 yen campaign. They had reserved a spot on the newspapers for the 30 yen campaign advertisement, but even then, the goal of spreading the news by the week seemed far-fetched.

Seiya constantly checked the net during meetings and work. They were nearing the end of another working day, yet the view count stood at 163. That was as good as nothing.

While walking out of the staff exit with drooped shoulders, Seiya had a chat with the security officers.

“Good work, Seiya-san.”

“Ah...”

“Today was rather different, don’t you think?”

“Huh?”

“Uh, I was watching the surveillance cameras while passing time, and I could hear some interesting stuff. And...”

“And...?”

The security officer gave a stiff expression, struggling to express his thoughts in words.

“One could hear lots of laughter among them. Guests and cast members alike.”

Seiya became even more distressed. He couldn’t click with what the security officer was trying to say. The view counts of the video were abysmal.

Laughter? What could that do in a situation like this?

Seiya checked the net again when he got home. It had climbed to 218 views. That was nothing worth mentioning; he had aimed for 100,000, yet the video only got about 200 views.



**Chapter 3: The Building That Had Been Abandoned For Decades**

Intermission: Suzuran Shopping District, North of Amagi Station

In the yakitori bar ‘Savage’—

“I was told that this was a ‘cheer-up’ meeting...” said Isuzu. “...but why are there only 4 people?”

The only ones sharing the table were Isuzu, Moffle, Macaron, and Tiramie.

“I invited the others, but they didn’t show up, *fumo*...”

“Moffle, you’re surprisingly unpopular, *ron*.”

“It looks like socializing after work is going out of style these days, *mi*. We don’t even get overtime allowances.”

“Well, it’s okay, *fumo*. At any rate, good work today. Cheers...”

The four of them gave a toast that severely lacked in energy. Isuzu’s glass naturally clinked with Moffle’s and Tiramie’s, but somehow missed the mark with Macaron who was sitting diagonally to her right. It certainly wasn’t something that warranted another try, but carrying on seemed a little disrespectful too.

“...”

It was during that awkward moment when Isuzu realized that she didn’t really had a close relationship with the 3 of them.

The three mascots gulped down their beer and hoppy and heaved in satisfaction. On the other hand, Isuzu only had some Oolong tea, so she drank in an appropriate manner.

“...So Macaron, how’s the lawsuit going, *mi*?”

“It seems like they’ll allow me to defer the payments, *ron*. But my daughter’s studying in a private school, so the expenses are going to be heavy.”

From the side, Moffle looked at Macaron who answered feebly.

“Like I said, you should stop wasting your money on that woman, *fumo*. Spending money on that ex-idol won’t end well for you.”

“I’ve heard that many times, *ron*.”

Macaron’s reply concealed regret and sadness.

“But you see, back then when we married, she was the world to me, *ron*...”

“Marriage is the death of man, *fumo*,” Moffle stated, seemingly confident in himself.

From Isuzu’s knowledge, Moffle should never have been married...but it could have just been an old proverb.

“She must have planned it all along, *fumo*. It’s the man’s fault for not noticing it earlier.”

“Seconded, *mi*. You’ll make no progress if you keep this up. Here’s my quote: ‘think of all hot babes as bitches’!”

Hearing Tiramie’s insensitive remarks, Macaron stood up.

“You’re saying my ex-wife’s a bitch, *ron*!?”

“But...isn’t that true, *mi*? Doesn’t she already have another husband?”

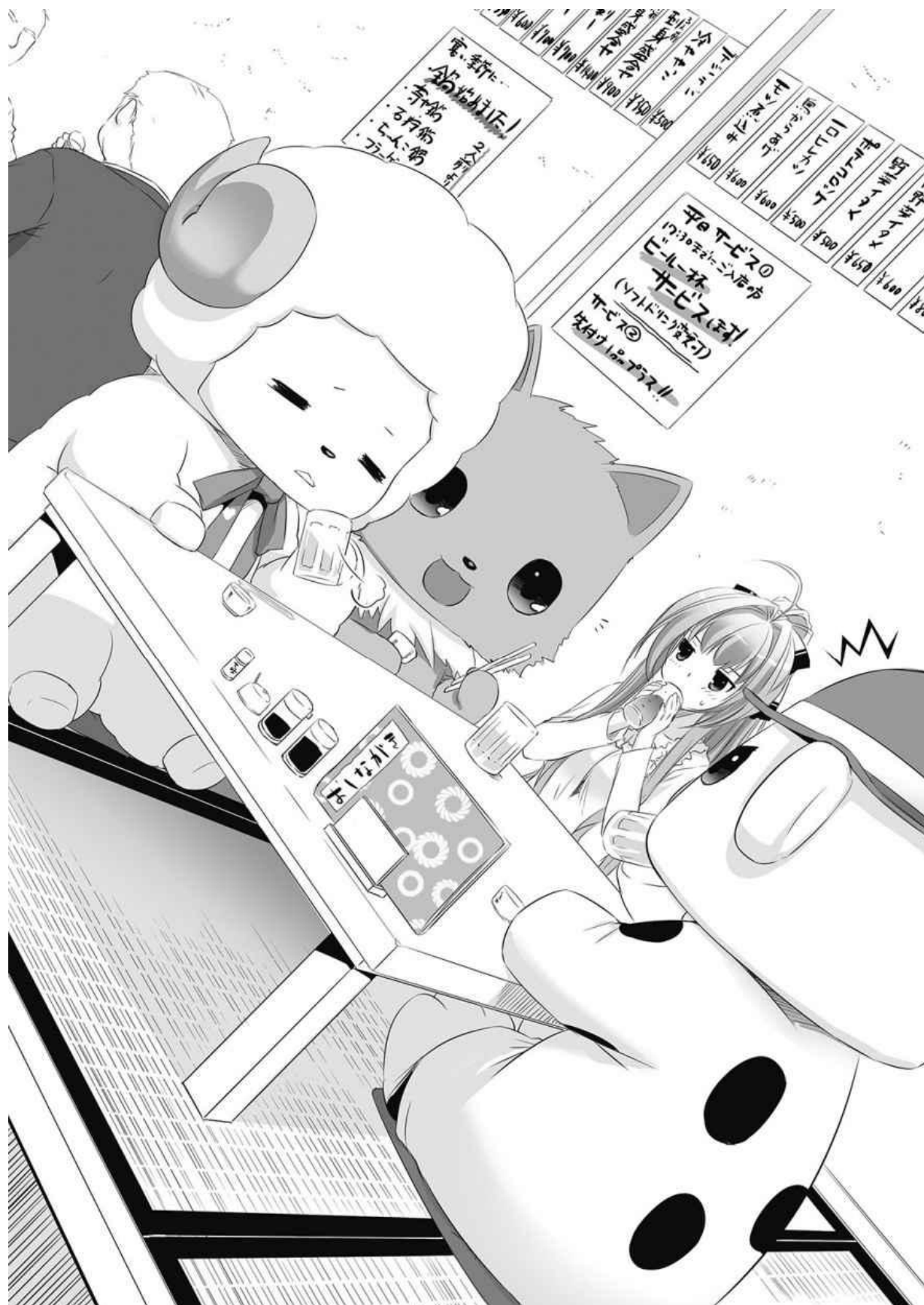
“Yeah, well...that’s true but...”

“She didn’t even seem like a virgin when you married her, *mi*. Moffle also told me he was worried for your sake.”

“S-She *did* tell me that she fooled around once, which shocked me back then but...stop...just stop, *ron*!”

“S-She *did* tell me that she fooled around once, which shocked me back then but...stop...just stop, *ron*!”





Macaron wrapped his arms around his head and Moffle smoked on a cigarette.

“Well, don’t worry too much about her past, *fumo*. It’s a man’s job to accept and embrace her for who she is.”

“Never knew you could say thoughtful things, *mi*!”

“Happens when you’ve lived enough of life, *fumo*. You’ll eventually get to a point where such things don’t even seem bad anymore.”

“Saying such profound words ain’t helping, *ron*!”

Just what would the guests think of the cast members if they heard such conversations? In an attempt to steer off the topic, Isuzu cleared her throat, “So...is this what you call a ‘cheering-up meeting’? I’d expected things to go livelier; I must say I’m somewhat disappointed.”

Hearing that, the 3 mascots gave a “my, my...” expression.

“You’re so outright, *fumo*.”

“It’s just some light catching up before the main topic, *ron*.”

“It’d be great if you would show us some concern, *mi*,” said the 3 of them.

“That being said, this isn’t really something we should discuss, anyway. More importantly, I’d like to hear more about *him*, *mi*.”

“Ah, so do I, *ron*.”

“Him?”

“Kanie Seiya, *ron*.”

“Yeah!”

Tiramie laughed and tried to mimic Seiya’s expression. He tried giving a stern face and made his mouth the shape of a ‘*ゝ*’. Of course, it didn’t resemble him one bit.

“So tell us, Isuzu-chan, what do you think about him? Does he match your preferences, *mi*?”

“I don’t understand the meaning behind your question.”

“You’re the one who gets to be by Seiya’s side all the time, *mi*. It’s also obvious that you’re covering a lot of things for him...this is very fishy indeed.”

“I’m just doing my job. That’s nothing more than assisting him in his duties.”

Hearing that, the 3 instinctively narrowed their eyes in suspicion.

“Even then, we wanna know if he’s your type or not, *mi*.”

“Tell us the truth, *ron*.”

“Spill the beans, we won’t tell anyone, *fumo*.”

*How ill-mannered of them. I don’t even know how they’d interpret whatever I say, and there’s sure to be a misunderstanding if he hears about this. This is bad in more ways than one.*

“...I’m leaving.”

Isuzu stood up and the mascots watched closely.

“Oh my, running away, *fumo*?”

“Is that a yes? Does that mean he’s your type, *ron*?”

“I heard you stayed at Seiya’s house for a night, *mi*. You guys must have done something, eh?”

“...I’ll slaughter the 3 of you.”

Isuzu shot the mascots one at a time, with precision such that it didn’t stir a ruckus in the shop. Leaving the 3 of them writhing in pain, she made her way out of the yakitori bar.

**Chapter 4: A Video on Customer Violence Was Uploaded!****Part 1**

It was the third day since accepting the role of park manager.

Seiya, who had endured the whole night without sleep, headed for school with his back slouched. He figured he should show up to school at least once in a while to prevent any students from getting suspicious. With nothing better to do on the packed train, Seiya whipped out his smartphone and checked the view count of his video.

“...?”

His eyes widened. The video announcing the commencement of the 30 yen campaign had 8,873 views. He had checked the video before sleeping last night, and it had only 218 views back then. Seiya couldn't believe that the viewership had jumped 40 times in such a short time span. From 218 to 8,873. How could this have happened?

Having endured his excitement throughout the lessons, Seiya checked on the views again during the break between classes. Within 2 hours, the view counts had jumped to 12,031. That number escalated to 21,230 by lunchtime. After 6 more hours passed, the view count had surpassed 40,000, and with every refresh Seiya made the views increased by the hundreds.

\*

“It seems the other video had become quite the controversy. And as a result the people who followed the link over to this announcement had increased...” Isuzu reported to Seiya, who had rushed over to the office after school.

“The *other* video...?”

“The one involving Moffle. It appears that someone took a video of the fight between the two and uploaded it online.”

“What on earth?”

He opened the lid of his laptop and immediately started searching. He had not noticed this when he was using his phone earlier, but it was clear as day.

One of the related videos on his announcement video page was titled “Mascot KO’s DQN in Theme Park” and had more than 190,000 views. The video had indeed recorded the whole incident involving the scuffle between Moffle and the man. It must have been uploaded by one of the families who retreated when Seiya jumped onto the scene.

It was like any other video of recent disputes posted online. The man was presumably hurling rude remarks at Moffle, who was not on screen, and there was no explanation on how the fight started. The unpleasant scene lasted for several tens of seconds.

Because of the terrible sound quality, it was difficult to make out what exactly Moffle was saying. It could only be interpreted as “*Fumomo, fumo, fumomomomo!*”

And then, the man ran towards Moffle. Just when things started to look bad, Moffle dodged the punch with incredible agility and executed a swift punch to his jaw. The man was defeated in one strike, and Moffle struck a pose as if preparing for follow-up attacks. The video ended there.

“Oh God...”

For the audience who didn’t know the full story, they must have felt it was exhilarating, though in truth Moffle was also at fault.

About half of the comments on the video were in favor of Moffle. Some of the comments included “Good job. Really relieved my urge to do the same to my customers”, “That strike wasn’t a fluke. This mascot knows his stuff “, and “What’s this theme park’s name? Thinking of checking it out myself”.

Of course, there were comments criticizing the actions of Moffle, saying things like “He shouldn’t be treating customers like this. How rude” and “This was



obviously staged, publicity stunt much?”, but most of the commenters had indicated interest in the showdown.

Its view counts were about to break the 200,000 milestone. The announcement video involving the 3 girls was at the top of its ‘related videos’ list. It looked like Seiya wasn’t wrong about his idea of attracting viewers. To sum it up, the video of the fight had attracted an enormous number of viewers, who in turn got linked to the announcement video posted by Seiya.

“Our viewership is still rising. This is a good sign.”

“Ugh...”

“Why the look on your face?”

“I guess this isn’t bad news but...”

Seiya had mixed feelings about this. And the reason being—

*“Mofu.”*

Moffle was standing at the entrance of the office with a smirk on his face.

“Moffle, your video garnered quite a lot of support.”

“I know, *fumo*. Well, my title as the lead mascot isn’t just for show. What do you call it, charisma?”

*This rat...he’s just riding the popularity wave!*

“I’d say I have some scary talent there, being able to create such a spectacle when facing a pinch, *fumo*. In other words, no matter how much an amateur tries to fake having skill, he’ll never surpass the real deal, *fumo*.”

Moffle grinned and looked down on Seiya. No, Moffle was actually shorter than Seiya but just then, it felt like Moffle was standing on a much taller pedestal of pride.

Seeing Seiya avert his gaze and tremble in anger, Moffle continued, "So, Kanie-kun. The video you recorded about...what was it again...the one with the girls in swimsuits was, ahem, quite the excitement, huh? Bet you thought its views would explode but what a pity. This world is a cruel one, hehehe."

*Screw this shit. This rat's getting on my nerves.*

Seiya was in a pathetic position, being unable to argue with him.

"It was out of mere luck that your video became viral," Isuzu interrupted. "We don't know who uploaded the video, but you must be thankful to the editor of this video. Depending on how it turned out, you might have been portrayed as the bad guy, you know?"

*"Mofu..."*

Hearing that valid argument, Moffle's expression became downcast.

"Also, putting that pride aside, don't you have something to say to Moffle, Kanie-kun?"

"If you say so..."

Seiya took a deep breath, wiping any traces of humiliation and anger away.

"...The announcement video of the 30 yen campaign has about 50,000 views. Chances are that it'll reach its peak tonight and won't get many more views starting tomorrow. We'll be lucky if this video even reaches 100,000 views."

*"Fumo..."*

"Furthermore, the demographic spreads far and wide across Japan. Even if they become interested in Amaburi, not many would live near enough to visit us. In the first place, just how many people can we attract using this video? 1 in 10 people? No, far fewer. About 1 in 50."

Two percent. And that was an optimistic estimation.

“In the unlikely event that we even get 100,000 views, only 2,000 of them would actually come. No, it might be even fewer than that. Perhaps a thousand or less... In other words, this video won’t help us with our shortage of guests.”

“Then why did you make us dress in those outfits?”

It was no surprise that Isuzu began to give reproachful comments.

“Because 1,001 guests are more than 1,000.”

Seiya made an outright statement. Both Moffle and Isuzu stood dumbfounded at his response.

“We’re in a spot where even an extra person means a lot.”

A secret plan for success? Such a thing did not exist. At any rate, every extra guest counted, and Seiya would do whatever it took to get that. He could think of no other solution apart from brute force.

“...”

Seiya wasn’t exactly a fan of making desperate statements like this, but it seemed that Moffle and Isuzu were greatly affected by it.

“...I get where you’re coming from, *fumo*,” Moffle said. He had long wiped the smirk off his face. “I’m leaving. The guests are waiting for me, *fumo*.”

Moffle walked out of the office, leaving Seiya and Isuzu behind.

“I believe Moffle has realized you’re serious now.”

“You think so?”

“Yes. I think your words gave him a real slap on the face.”

“A slap?”

*That’s an odd way to phrase it. I was only talking about my approach on this matter.*

“You’re set on doing anything it takes, even if it only draws an extra person here. On the other hand, Moffle ran away from the plaza just to spite you. Hearing you say that, I’d say he wouldn’t be very pleased with his own conduct.”

“Ah, I see.”

*That rat, if anything else, has a pride that matches no other. He won’t be able to loaf around after hearing me say that.*

Isuzu peered out of the office and confirmed that no one was present in the hallway. Then, she shut the door to the office and walked towards Seiya.

“Kanie-kun.”

“W-What’s up?”

Her face was close, and her pupils stared straight into his soul. Seiya inadvertently stiffened his posture.

“I will complain no further. If you need another video, I’ll gladly contribute as an actor. Likewise, if you ask me to strip, I’ll do so right away.”

“W-Wait, stripping is a little too...”

“...You’re right. I might just pass on that. What I mean to say is that you’re a good commander.”

“Okay...”

While using that word as a filler for his lack of things to say, Seiya could feel her words sinking into him.

*A good commander? I wonder about that. The chances of this whole issue ending in an ugly manner is...high to say the least.*

Isuzu took a step back, ending their conversation.

“I’ll be heading onstage too. I’m thinking of entertaining some guests with some shooting performances.”

“Spare some thought for their lives, will you?”

“I’ll try.”

Wielding her musket in hand, Isuzu stepped out of the office.

\*

Seiya carried on with his usual work: gathering reports from various departments, handing out tasks, and conducting meetings between the cast members. He oversaw the maintenance and restructuring of infrastructure, along with confirming the details with the press.

Descending a flight of stairs, Seiya decided that he would check on how they were doing onstage.

“Alright...”

He put his hands through the sleeves of his park uniform. The dark-blue suit with a gold lanyard had an armband that read “Acting Manager”. It might seem like some childish attempt at role play, but wearing the uniform while onstage was a rule that was decided long ago.

He left the office building and headed for the entrance plaza. The sky was gradually turning dark. There was still some time before the park closed for the day, but most of the guests were already streaming out.

“...?”

The Entrance Square was strangely still buzzing with activity. It could be said that a lot of the guests were gathering around it. To be fair, there weren’t many guests to begin with due to the season, but those who passed by on their way out stopped to enjoy the cast’s performance.

*“Mofu! Mofu!”*



Moffle was walking around juggling balls, increasing the number as he got faster. It was certainly a rare skill to have, given his short arms. About 5 people applauded at the end of his performance, and Moffle gave a bow in appreciation.

*“Ron! Ron!”*

Macaron was dancing to some hip-hop music from an old radio cassette. According to the records in his office, Macaron had supposedly specialized in social dancing, but this was clearly breakdancing. He was moving to the beat of the tune by Run-D.M.C., and the guests were cheering to his dance moves.

*“Mi! Mi!”*

Tiramie was doing a balancing act on some bamboo stilts. However, these ‘stilts’ were more than 3 meters tall and any mascot of that size would find difficulty standing with them on. Nonetheless, Tiramie was maneuvering them effortlessly, running around the plaza and doing acrobatic stunts that seemed second nature to him. The guests walking by roared in approval.

*“...”*

Isuzu was also onstage. She took careful aim at balloons on Wanipi’s and Tricen’s heads. Their pale faces could be seen through the blindfolds, and after every successful shot, the 5 to 6 guests standing around would applaud for them.

There were other cast members around the plaza too, busy entertaining the guests who were leaving the park. It appeared that those were the “sounds of laughter” that the security guard was referring to. It was certainly different from what he’d seen when he first visited this place. These cast members were entertaining their guests. They were doing it in earnest. And the laughter and smiles of their guests were in turn making the cast happy.

Seiya spent about 2 to 3 minutes standing at the entrance gazing at the sight.

*“You guys should’ve done this from the very beginning...”*

These thoughts subconsciously leaked out from him.

“No, this is all thanks to you.”

Seiya turned around in surprise and saw Latifa beside him. She must have walked here with aid from Muse.

“Latifa.”

“Kanie-sama.”

With her eyelids still shut, Latifa addressed Seiya with a faint smile on her face. However, Muse, who extended her hand to support Latifa, looked rather uneasy.

“I can tell that things have changed ever since you came. I’d always thought that there was no hope...yet knowing this makes me feel that things might actually be different this time. Can you see, uncle...I mean Moffle-san?”

After his juggling act had finished, Moffle released some pigeons from his hat and bowed to the applauding guests.

“It’s been a while since Moffle has worked so hard.”

“I see...”

Moffle’s show certainly did not seem like just an act.

“His efforts have impacted the performance of the other cast members too. It feels like a statement to you that even if this park were to eventually close, ‘I bet you’ve never seen an entertainment service as good as this’.”

“So you’re saying I’m giving them hope?”

“Yes. I believe humans call this a ‘miracle’.”

*A miracle, huh? Give me a break.*

Seiya somehow suppressed his urge to lament about her statement.

*I see. The mood here has changed quite a bit since my arrival. But attracting 100,000 guests is no easy feat. I’d say we’d have hope if we managed to reach max capacity every day, but that won’t be the case.*

*The crowd assembling around the mascots equates to about 2 families at most. I'll admit that every extra guest counts, but at this rate we'll never—*

“Kanie-sama, shall we take a walk for a bit?”

“?”

“We still have about an hour before the park closes for the day. So, if possible...”

Latifa hesitated for a moment and her cheeks reddened.

“Please go on a date with me.”

**Chapter 4: A Video on Customer Violence Was Uploaded!****Part 2**

After telling Muse, who had a worried expression on her face, that “it’d be fine”, Seiya went ahead and brought Latifa around the park. Serving as an escort for a person who could not see, it was only natural that they ended up holding each other’s hand. The cast members were stunned upon watching the two, and the guests who did not know of the two were giving comments like “what a strange couple”.

For starters, they headed for Moffle’s Sweet House. Unsurprisingly, Latifa didn’t care for the game of shooting puppet mice with laser guns. After completion, they entered the final room where Moffle offered to take a commemorative photo for them. Upon closer inspection, however, it wasn’t really Moffle, but just someone wearing a similar looking costume.

*“Mofu!”*

The real Moffle was at the entrance square, so this one must have been a random suit actor.

*“Ah, that really shocked me.”*

The man inside the suit said, “We’re lacking in manpower in many departments, so I ended up helping out here...”

*Oh, this must be the security officer I see a lot of.*

*“Thanks a lot for the help. I’ll consider offering you some overtime pay.”*

*“No worries; I’m enjoying my work, after all. The guests really like taking pictures with me, too.”*

While saying that, the security guard took two pictures of Latifa and Seiya. Latifa tugged on Seiya’s arm on the abrupt noise of the shutter.

They proceeded to Tiramie's Flower Adventure and Macaron's Music Theatre, and thanked the covering cast members for their hard work.

After having fun at several other attractions, Seiya said, "That's pretty much it for the famous attractions of this area. Is there anywhere else you'd like to go?"

Hearing that, Latifa replied, "Yes. I wish to ride on the large Ferris wheel."

"The large Ferris wheel, huh..."

The large Ferris wheel was an extremely old attraction in Amaburi, constructed way earlier than the '80s economic bubble. Back then, this area called "Amagi Park" had been blossoming in popularity. Despite being called the *large* Ferris wheel, it was actually relatively small in size. One would probably be able to get a better view by climbing to the top of any nearby skyscraper.

Nonetheless, if given a choice, Seiya would not want to hop on board.

"Is there anything else you want to do? It's not like we'd be able to see much in this anyway...ah..."

Seiya had completely forgotten about Latifa's vision.

"No wait...my bad..."

"Don't worry about it. Anyway, I still wish to ride it."

"In that case, I won't stop you..."

As Seiya spoke, he could feel sweat beginning to trickle down his back.

"Let's go."

Seiya held Latifa's hand and got on the Ferris wheel. The park had already closed, and there were no longer any guests.

After the doors of the gondola closed, Seiya said, "Not to spoil the mood or anything, but why are you so eager to ride on the Ferris wheel when you can't see the scenery?"



“It’s true that I’m blind, but I was once able to view it. That was really long ago, though.”

“?”

“Nonetheless, the sensations on this Ferris wheel always set me at ease. I’m able to feel the rocking and the hardness of the seat, and I can hear the creaks of the door. I wanted you to experience them, too.”

“I see...”

Seiya was unable to comprehend what Latifa was trying to get across. Under normal circumstances, Seiya would have asked for clarification on the matter, but—

“We’re pretty high up, huh?” Seiya remarked while clenching his chest.

The Ferris wheel wasn’t that big, but it was still about 4 stories high. The surrounding attractions had now been reduced to nothing but rooftops, and the “rocking” and “creaking” that Latifa spoke of became increasingly jarring. Similarly, his heart’s thumping had become louder.

“How’s it going?”

“Huh? A-Ah...if you’re referring to the time, it’s been about ten minutes, I guess?”

He couldn’t help but raise his voice in panic.

*Shit! Hasn’t it reached the top yet? Are we still getting higher? Someone save me...*

“Kanie-sama, are you alright?”

“W-What are you talking about?”

“Your voice sounds shaky...”

“I-I-It’s just your imagination.”

While the one they were riding on was nothing compared to modern Ferris wheels, there was a beautiful view waiting at the apex nonetheless.

Seiya turned to watch the expanse of evening lights emitting from the streets of southern Tokyo. These lights were just like the glittering of jewelry, sparkling harmoniously throughout a vast distance far beyond his visible range. Perhaps he might even be able to enjoy it just by capturing a video or photo of this.

“How is the scenery, Kanie-sama?” Latifa inquired with her eyes still closed.

“Well...it certainly is pretty, though still nothing compared to the view of Hong Kong at night.”

“Kanie-sama? Your voice is trembling very badly...”

*What should I do? We're not even at the apex yet, only at the 11 o'clock position. I wanna get out of this place ASAP.*

“Kanie-sama?”

*How long am I going to have to stay cooped up in here?*

Seiya was panting heavily, the back of his shirt drenched in sweat. Every rock of the gondola was weakening his mental strength in keeping his sanity in check. Of course, looking out at the scenery didn't help.

*I've had enough of this! Get me out of here!*

“Erm, by any chance are you afraid of heights...?”

“T-There's no way I'd be afraid of this...” he subconsciously raised his voice in response.

Slightly shocked at his answer, Latifa lowered her shoulders.

“I'm sorry, I didn't mean to sound so insensitive...”

“Ah, that's not it...But anyway...”

He loosened his necktie and unbuttoned the top button of his shirt. Not wanting to look down, Seiya closed his eyes and shook his head in denial.

He had no choice but to continue the conversation to distract himself. Now wasn't the time to be worried about his reputation or impressing others.

"I'm just...bad with high places..."

It was during middle school when Seiya realized he had developed acrophobia. During his elementary school days, he was completely fine. He'd even take part in tests of courage in 10-floor buildings with his neighbors. Yet, at some point during this time he became unable to handle heights.

Perhaps this was related to his time when his parents had forced him to work for the talent agency. At any rate, he first noticed his fear for heights during the 6th year of elementary school when he did not dare touch the handrails on his school's rooftop.

In fact, a similar experience had happened even before that. Whenever he got too high up, his pulse would skyrocket. And when he looked at the ground below, his legs would wobble, making him feel like he was losing his balance. Nonetheless, he only ever acknowledged his fear in the spring of his 6th year in elementary school.

And even when he quit the talent agency, his acrophobia never really went away. Since then, he'd been trying to avoid high places. In fact, he was also reluctant to ride on the pathetic Doki-Doki Coaster on his first day in Amaburi too.

Seiya looked at Latifa, and briefly explained his situation. And every once in a while, she would nod in response.

"...S-So that's why I'm in a really tight spot right now in this Ferris wheel...Well, this isn't something that would cause a panic attack, so I'm sure I'll be fine if I close my eyes and carry on with our conversation...H-How high are we now?"

He probably couldn't even bear to open his eyes now.

"Right now we're...at the 2 o'clock position."

"Is that so? How can you tell?"

“From the sound and our weight. Don’t worry, we’re descending.”

Her hands gently held on to Seiya’s fingers. For some reason, the smooth and cold sensation shocked him even more than the kiss back then.

“It’ll be fine,” Latifa repeated with a voice that echoed her gentle nature, and Seiya’s legs eventually stopped shivering. “Take a deep breath and open your eyes. We’re back down.”

“...”

Seiya followed her suggestion.

Just as Latifa had said, he no longer felt frightened. A glance out from the window revealed that their gondola had nearly reached the bottom.

“How are you feeling?”

“Ah, much better.”

Seiya was more relieved than he was humiliated. Nonetheless, the thought that he had just showed an embarrassing side of him to Latifa made him feel pathetic.

“I apologize for making you ride on the Ferris wheel without knowing your fear of heights.”

Latifa’s unusually low tone of speech made her sound apologetic.

“No, it was my fault for thinking that I could handle it.”

“Okay, but...”

“?”

“N-Never mind, it’s nothing.”

“Hey, now I’m curious. Just say it.”

“Okay. I hope this doesn’t make you mad or anything...”

Latifa waited for a brief moment, and her lips revealed a teasing smile.

“You were pretty cute back there.”

“...”

For some reason Seiya had an unpleasant feeling about this, just like being patted by a girl who was older than him.

And so after touring the remaining attractions in the park, Seiya split up with Latifa and returned to his own work. It appeared that Seiya’s changes to the park were taking effect. All the attractions were packed with many more guests than their old Sunday crowd.

The mascots’ service to the customers had improved as well, though from the guests’ standpoint, they might’ve not noticed the change. And that was a good thing, for it would be unsightly for an entertainer to give off an impression of being a try-hard. Throughout these few days, he could see vast improvements in the park’s service.

*Then again, was that really the case?*

Perhaps the only thing that had changed was his perception of things? Seiya recalled being terribly reluctant when he was first dragged into this mess by Isuzu, yet he came to work willingly and accepted his tasks in an optimistic light today. So maybe the harsh reality was just that his mindset had changed. Nonetheless, Seiya was no longer able to come to a conclusion.

Right when Seiya was about to leave after finishing the paperwork, Isuzu reported the day’s visitor count.

“2,928.”

“What?”

“We’ve got 2,928 guests today. That’s twice the number of yesterday’s.”

Today was Thursday, so the crowd should not have been as big compared to the weekends. It wouldn’t be unusual for the visitor count to be about the same as that of Wednesday. Yet, they had doubled their visitor count.





“By the way, this number is the largest we’ve ever had on a Thursday in years.”

“Yeah, I know.”

Seiya had already gone through the past records of the park. This was certainly a strange phenomenon.

“Looks like the 30 yen campaign is working.”

“You’re right, but then again...”

Seiya hesitated for a brief moment.

*But then again, this number is still beyond expectations. I’d only predicted the campaign to increase our visitor counts by about 1.5x at max, so perhaps there’s something else at play here?*

“But then again...?”

“Ah, it’s nothing.”

Even though the mascots’ customer service had improved, it was too early for this to have any visible effect. After all, it would probably take months for guests to recommend their friends and for them to actually come and visit. It definitely wasn’t something that could happen in days.

So maybe it was right to say that everything was due to the surprising effectiveness of the 30 yen campaign. Nonetheless, there was something he had to clarify with Isuzu.

“Sento...”

“Hmm?”

“Do you notice any changes in that rat’s behavior during the past few days?”

After hearing that, Isuzu snorted as if she was just asked an obvious question.

“Of course. I’ve never seen him work this hard in ages. And...”

“And?”

Isuzu paused for a brief moment.

“I’m in no position to say this, but it feels like Moffle’s actually enjoying his work for once.”



**Chapter 4: A Video on Customer Violence Was Uploaded!****Part 3**

3,411 guests visited the park the next day.

It was only a fraction of what a normal Friday crowd should have been, but this was still unprecedented in the recent years of Amaburi's history. Also, as of noon, the campaign video had garnered 90,000 views just as Seiya had predicted.

During the morning, Seiya had gotten the people from the local broadcasting company to film the attractions in the park and news of the 30 yen campaign was set to be aired that evening.

"What a surprise! Never knew you'd managed to invite the news company," said Tricen, who had just sent the crew off.

"I resorted to some old connections," Seiya explained in a reluctant manner.

"I worked with a lot of producers back then, and these guys had lived through the ages. I'd never thought we'd meet again, but since we're in such a desperate situation, I gave in and contacted them."

"Ah, that figures."

"I know a lot of their weaknesses, you see. Even their relationships with females."

"I see..."

Tricen did not know much about Seiya's past, but he at least knew he had a pretty complicated childhood. He decided not to press the matter.

"We've got a lot of clients coming tomorrow too. Have you gotten familiar with the schedule?"

"Well, yeah. I'm all pumped up and ready to entertain them...especially the one coming at 11. That Ooishi-san is well-known for her big titties."

“Maybe I should make you our cleaner instead.”



\*

The visitor count for Saturday increased dramatically, probably due to the late night news and the morning television program that featured the park, or perhaps even the announcement video. Furthermore, today would be the first day the advertisements rolled out on the morning newspapers.

Just looking out at the astronomical crowd gave the cast members a morale boost. Tricen and several representatives entered the office and mentioned the huge spike in activity today. Seiya nodded in satisfaction and told them to “keep up the good work”.

However, Ashe, the representative of accounts, came over with a cloudy expression and highlighted the enormous expenses incurred as a result of the aggressive advertising, expressing distaste for Seiya’s inconsiderate actions given that he was only a temporary staff member.

Ashe’s point was valid, but he simply had no room for consideration. He’d said multiple times that a drowning man could not be picky about the plank he was clinging to dear life on.

Seiya could not give any further refute to this, and Ashe continued her protest, “Although our visitor counts are rising, at this rate we’ll never make it.”

“You’re right...I understand your concerns.”

“By the way, why are you requesting a cleanup for the 2nd park which we almost never use? Also, we’ve already cleaned the stadium once at the end of last year.”

Ashe was referring to the stadium that Seiya found with Isuzu and Muse. Seiya had one-sidedly ordered a cleanup of the place.

“Don’t worry about it,” Seiya avoided the question.



“But—”

“It’s just a backup plan. Don’t question this further, there’s no room for negotiation on this matter.”

Having nothing else to say, Ashe stepped out of the office and Isuzu walked in to check on him.

“Looks like you two don’t agree with each other’s actions.”

“She’s going to have to bear with me for the moment.”

“I see.”

Isuzu gave a simple nod and opened the folder she was holding.

“I’m sure you’re aware of our numbers today: 8,168 people.”

*That was more than double yesterday’s visitor count. If we keep this up, we might actually—*

Not wanting to say this to Isuzu, Seiya averted his gaze.

“Is that so...”



\*

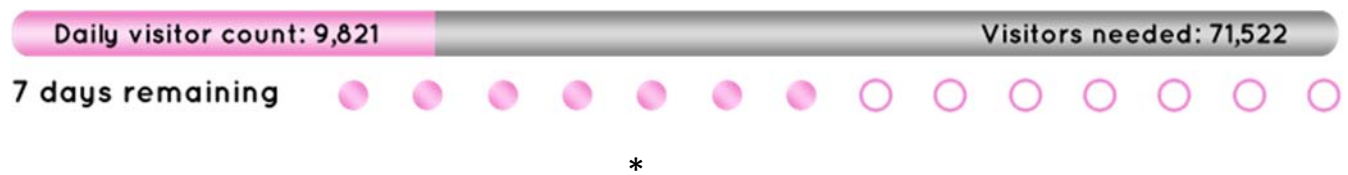
It was no surprise that the Sunday crowd exploded in size.

All of their advertisement efforts were really beginning to take effect. The cast members were hard at work entertaining their guests, who in turn made them satisfied with their own service.

Having completed the negotiations with several transport companies, Seiya went over to check on the cast. The cast members were certainly having fun themselves, and their guests were smiling happily. There were still some minor issues to be fixed, but they were doing their best to make the guests believe—

That they would not give up just yet.

After the park's closure for the day, Isuzu brought over the data on their daily visitor statistics. It barely missed the 10,000 mark, standing at 9,821 people.



The following Monday.

Their visitor count took a plunge after entering a weekday once again. After school ended, Seiya came over to check on the development of his proposed improvements. It was then that Isuzu reported their daily visitor count.

“2,688 people.”

“I see...”

It was a weekday, after all. To be fair, the visitor count for today was greater than that of last Monday. However—

*2,700 people? However I see it, this isn't gonna be enough to reach our target. And we're running out of time. If we had a longer time frame, this 30 yen campaign would be a powerful force to be reckoned with. The efforts of the cast members would also see results. But in order for this to truly shine, we need an extension in the deadline. We can't achieve much of anything in just 10 days.*

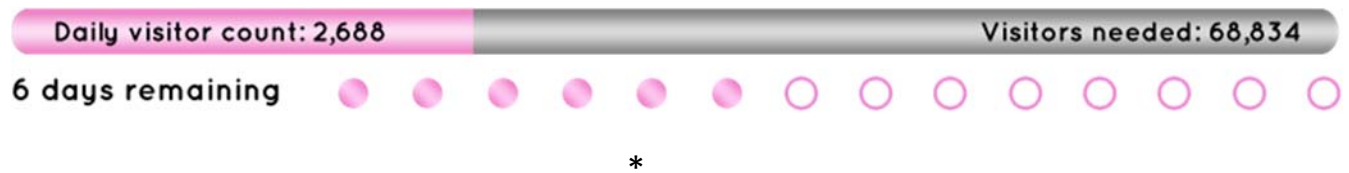
The visitor counts were dropping, but the park was relentlessly putting in effort to bring them higher. They were bound to achieve considerable success, but Amagi Development would definitely not wait for that to happen.

“It can't be helped. I think we'll do just fine if we maintain this pace till the weekends again.”

“Ah, I guess so.”

Seiya calmed himself down a little, and said, “All that’s left now is to pray for a miracle.”

Isuzu made a stern expression having heard that statement.



Tuesday’s visitor count dipped once again to 1,935 guests.

The announcement video’s view count was coming to a standstill, and the other advertisements were losing the people’s interests. The cast members were giving their best, yet their efforts did not yield commensurate returns.

*We’re done for.*

The only ones suppressing the depressing mood of the other cast members were Moffle and the other mascots, who were doing everything they could. They’d improved their services drastically, never slacked off on the regular maintenance of their attractions, and even tried to spread the word through social media. They’d essentially contributed in everything from the sales to traffic control. And when cast members came crying to them in despair, they’d maintain their composure and give them a pat on their backs.

At the end of the day when Seiya was about to drag his feet through the staff exit, he saw a particular someone standing right in front of the park.

Kurusu Takaya from Amagi Development. A visitor’s pass was hanging from his neck.

“Yo. We meet again, huh?”

All this despite Seiya hoping to never see him again. He probably came to check on the visitor count.

The visitor counter at the entrance gate was firmly planted and locked such that it was impossible to be tampered with, designed only to be accessible by Amagi Development and Amagi Brilliant Park. It was hence impossible to hide or fake the visitor count.

“So you decided to help them out, huh? You must really love the park.”

“What I do is none of your business.”

“Those guys must be working hard, considering how they’ve resorted to cheap tricks and advertisement strategies...though it looks like they’ve finally hit a slump. I take it you’re also involved in this?”

Kurusu shouldn’t have known that Seiya was working as the acting manager of the park. Seiya stumbled as he struggled to make something up.

“Nah, I just do the filthy chores.”

“Hmph.”

Kurusu looked at him carefully. He might have figured out that Seiya had used his past connections to negotiate favorable advertising offers.

“I see...By the way, there was truck with the label ‘Yanoguchi Cleaning Services’ that passed by earlier. By any chance, did you hear anything about it?”

“Not really. Well then, I’ll be on my way.”

Seiya wanted to quickly end the conversation and make his way through, but Kurusu remained persistent and caught up with him.

“But wait, don’t you think it’s strange? Usually ‘Amagi Maintenance’ is the one in charge of the cleaning around here. It’s pretty weird for them to let in a different company’s cleaning truck.”

“How am I supposed to know about that?”

“Well, I guess you’re right. My bad, hahaha.”

He must have caught an eye on the company that the 2nd park had hired for cleaning services. Compared to the other companies approved by Amagi Development, Yanoguchi Cleaning Services' rates were a bargain. This could be brought up to the authorities, but maybe he might just turn a blind eye on this for awhile—

"The pieces aren't fitting here. Since last week, there were rumors about this park going around, you see."

"Huh?"

"That someone had noticed that a smart aleck is behind these...events, Kodama-kun. Oh sorry, I mean Kanie-kun."

Seiya quickly checked the ID card that he was wearing, and Kurisu snuck a peek at his facial expression.

"Did I hit a bullseye?"

"Strange way of interpreting. What made you think so?"

"Hmm, intuition, I'd say."

*Lies. Definitely ain't intuition. This man here is sharp. He definitely hasn't forgotten about my estimate on the amount of money a family has to spend for the park to stay afloat. It's likely that he noticed a significant change in the park's operations and came to find out who was behind it.*

Seiya began to regret having given such an accurate estimation back then. But then again, the thought of helping to save the park had never crossed his mind, so it couldn't be avoided.

*Wait, hold on. There might be a spy among the cast members. If that's the case, then he would have already known everything and was merely trying to deceive him.*

"Surely you're overestimating my abilities."



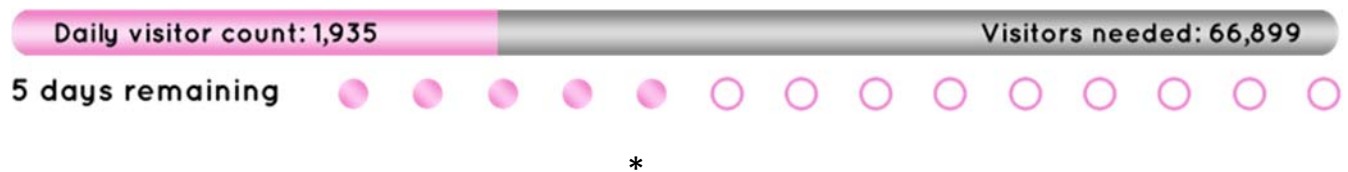
Seiya revealed a bitter smile befitting of a high schooler who had just been praised as a mature adult. And as Seiya acted, he quickly considered.

*Should I read his mind? No, now's still not the time. I should just use my observations and wits against him.*

"I'll leave it up to your imagination. I'm leaving."

That line was a lie as well. He spoke his mind without any humility. That was definitely not enough to trick Kurisu, but it should have at least concealed Seiya's true thoughts.

And with that, Seiya left and called it a day.



The next day's visitor count did not change much, though it was still considered better than the average Wednesday crowd during this season.

Every once in a while, Seiya would check on the mascots in between his tasks. The atmosphere wasn't as bad as he expected. They were continuing their jobs without hesitation, working to bring liveliness among the crowd of guests while clinging to a tiny bit of hope. The real cast members' passion and effort had spurred on the regular cast members too. Of course, there were cast members who appeared to have lost the will to work, and Seiya brought them to the backstage.

"Keep up the good work, guys."

After the park had closed, Seiya spoke to Latifa at the kitchen in the castle.

"The thing is...at this rate we won't make the mark in time. No matter how hard we try, gathering 40,000 guests to visit by the weekend simply isn't possible."

"Is that so..."

Her hands she was using to cook with stopped, and Latifa muttered. She mashed the boiled potatoes and prepared the tools needed to make tomorrow's croquettes. Her small figure, wearing an apron and holding a huge bowl, was adorable.

"If Kanie-sama says so, then that must be true..." Latifa said with downcast eyes.

Suppressing his urge to put his hands on her slim shoulders, Seiya continued, "There's something I need to ask you."

"Yes?"

"What will happen to you if this park closes?"

"I'm not sure myself."

"That's..."

"I really don't know either."

Saying that, Latifa gave a complicated smile.

"The people from Maple Land rely on Animus, the physical manifestation of the happiness of people, in order to survive. And it is for that purpose that this theme park was built. The problem is that I happen to require a significantly larger amount of animus compared to other cast members."

"But why? I don't understand..."

"I've been cursed."

"...Cursed?"

"But first, I need to tell you a popular children's story from my land."

Still working on the croquettes, Latifa began, "A long time ago, Maple Land was attacked by an evil dragon. With their land threatened, the kingdom dispatched countless troops to stave it off, but to no avail.

It was then a single magician appeared and offered to chase the dragon away in exchange for the princess' hand in marriage."

"..."

"Having exhausted all options, the king agreed, and the magician carried out his part of the promise and chased the dragon away. With that, the magician asked to have the princess. However, the king was reluctant to give his daughter away and refused, deploying the army to banish the magician."

The sight of a fairy-tale-like maiden reciting a fairy-tale-like story was certainly very interesting. It sounded pretty cliché, but Seiya made sure not to reveal his thoughts as he nodded.

"The mighty knights of Maple Land drove the magician to the edge of a cliff. With wounds and scratches all over him, the magician said, 'I'll curse your princess for eternity!' and fell into the abyss. Right after that, the princess fell ill. The girl who was once lively enough to run around the hills became sickly and lost her vision."

"So that's the curse you're referring to?"

"Yes. As I mentioned earlier, we cannot live without a constant supply of Animus. The curse that the magician put on her was one that consumes the Animus within her, causing an Animus deficiency. The royal physicians were unable to remove the curse, but decided that the only way for her to survive would be to bring her down to an Argel that was abundant in Animus."

"And that Argel happened to be..."

"Yes, this theme park."

Latifa stopped for a moment and sighed. The aroma of mashed potatoes, meat, and spices filled the room, but the reason Seiya swallowed his saliva was not due to a stimulated appetite.

"In other words, you're the princess in the story?"

"That's right."

“So won’t it be bad if this theme park were to get taken down?”

“I’m afraid so,” Latifa sighed and made a faint smile. “Maybe another theme park out there might take me in, though given my circumstances I do not think I can contribute to the best of my ability...”

“...And you’re fine with that?”

“I do not have a choice.”

Seiya felt like using his magical power that allowed him to hear people’s hearts. He wanted to know what Latifa truly felt.

*How can you remain so calm despite this? Aren’t you the slightest bit afraid? Don’t you resent your fate or feel like crying and asking for help?*

Seiya couldn’t stand not knowing. It was simple. All he had to do was ask “what do you think about this situation?” and use his power.

*How long do I intend to preserve my ammunition? Now would probably be a good time to use my grenade as well. There’s no point in saving them until the end of the game. So use it!*

Seiya opened his mouth, closed it, and opened it again. In the end, this was all he could manage: “When will you fry these croquettes?”

*Focus!*

Latifa’s voice could not be heard.

“...These are for tomorrow, so I’ll fry them in the morning. Though if you wish, I could always fry some for now, you know?”

“...Ah,” Seiya gave a vague response, seemingly discouraged.

*Looks like I can’t use my power on Latifa. Wait, I might have already used it by accident when she bestowed it on me back then. Well, whatever.*

Seiya did not want to pry into her secrets, and he didn't want to waste his power on something like this either.

"Kanie-sama?"

"Sorry. Two croquettes, please. I'm starving."

Seiya's clouded thoughts began to clear up—for he decided that he would not let this park die just yet.





**Chapter 4: A Video on Customer Violence Was Uploaded!****Part 4**

It was Thursday morning. Tiramie was on the bus to work where he did his everyday ritual of surfing the net and reading news articles on his smartphone.

As he scrolled through articles with money-laundering scandals, traffic accidents in some unknown countryside, bombings in other nations, and some stupid statement made by an arrogant prick from a business federation, he came across a tiny article on local news.

“Fire Breaks Out at Kajinomoto Stadium”

Kajinomoto Stadium was a famous soccer stadium located beside Amagi Town. Since that was the home ground for the soccer team Melody Shibasaki, Tiramie frequently went there to spectate matches. He clicked the link and read the article.

(Early this morning, a small fire broke out at Kajinomoto Stadium, located in Choufu. The Choufu fire department was dispatched and the fire was extinguished promptly without any casualties. The police are investigating the cause of the fire, but it is believed that it was due to a faulty electrical appliance inside the stadium.)

It was a considerably short article. And that was forgivable, for the essential details were that a small fire broke out in the middle of the night and nobody was harmed.

*It was an old stadium, so there was bound to be faulty equipment in there.*

“Mi...?”

*Wait, hold on a sec. Today's Thursday, the 2nd week of March. The first match of the J League between Melody Shibazaki and Kurawa Metz was supposed to be held in the stadium this Saturday. There's no mistaking it; I even swallowed my tears working in this dying park because Macaron said he'd get me good tickets.*

*To think that a fire occurred with such bad timing...Would they be okay?*

\*

"This is definitely not okay!" said the representative of administration in the emergency meeting with the various department heads. "While it's true that the fire wasn't that big, the firefighters used a lot of water. I know that we shouldn't blame them for it, but because of that a lot of electrical equipment in the stadium and from our neighbors is wet."

The projector in the meeting room displayed the terrible sight to illustrate the extent of the damage. A worker was busy using a pump to drain the water out of equipment that was almost fully submerged in water. A firefighter who stood in front of the charred electric generator was yelling at the photographer to leave the area.

"We'll have to replace all of the generators. The parts aren't expensive, but because this is an old facility we have to order them from the old supplier, and that would take more than a week. Also, in order to prevent this from happening again in the future, we'll have to get specialists to inspect the facilities, but they are limited in number."

"So what does this all mean?"

The representative from their biggest shareholder rubbed his temples and said, "We won't be able to host the match on Saturday. The match will be held at 5pm, so adequate lighting is essential. The problem is that our current power supply won't suffice. Even if we barely manage to bring the brightness levels to acceptable standards, we won't be able to do anything else. The snack stalls won't even be able to heat their products."

“What on earth...”

“So it seems like this is unavoidable. We have done this several times in the past because of typhoons and earthquakes, though. Prepare an announcement for the postponement.”

“But this is the opening match! This is important for those who have made it past the preliminaries. Our opponent was last year’s champion too; we’re sure to get lots of spectators. Is there something we can do about this?”

Gloom hung over the meeting room. All the tickets had already sold out. An abundant amount of resources would have to be used to control the disorder and refund their supporters. It definitely wasn’t something their disaster insurance would cover.

“All we can do now is contact the league manager and request a reschedule for our match. I’m sure there have been instances of matches taking place over consecutive days.”

The meeting room burst into activity.

“No way...that’ll put a lot of stress on the players! We shouldn’t force them to do this!”

“The people might accept this if it were a typhoon, but this is just a tiny fire!”

“And we’re giving too short of a notice! We can’t just...!”

The representatives began arguing among themselves, hurling whatever comments they pleased.

“Erm, may I?”

Amid the chaos, the representative from one of the sponsors raised his hand. Normally he would be what people would call the yes man, agreeing to everyone’s opinions without voicing his own. And it was this precise reason that nobody took notice of his attempt at voicing his own opinion.

“E-Excuse me!”

The others stopped their arguments and diverted their attention towards him.

“What is it?”

“I remember there should be an old contract regarding situations like this. Give me a moment—”

Saying that, the man silently started up his tablet computer. The older members gave displeased looks at his behavior, but those that were of a similar age to him tried to sneak a peek at the applications he was using.

“Ah, here it is. It’s a contract signed in 1993 involving Kajinomoto Stadium, Choufu and Amagi, together with this ‘Maple’ agency...”

“A ‘Maple’ agency?”

“It refers to the management of Amagi Brilliant Park. I’m sure everyone is aware that it’s the old amusement park beside Amagi...”

Half of the members gazed up at the ceiling and nodded, as if remembering the glory days of the park.

“Ah, *that* amusement park.”

“It’s still running? Impressive...”

“Actually, we should still have old posters of it in this stadium.”

“Come to think of it...”

As they were discussing among themselves, the man continued, “This is part of what the contract says. Apparently, there is a stadium in Amagi Brilliant Park itself, and according to the contract, the stadium in Amagi Brilliant Park will provide aid in times like this. In exchange for bearing the costs incurred for the usage of the stadium, they will be allowed to put advertisement posters on the park around the stadium during the match at lowered rates...”

In other words, they could use the amusement park's field for free. The representative from the league checked with the authorities, and surprisingly enough confirmed that this was allowed. There are strict regulations on the state of the field for such official matches like this, but the park had been maintaining the stadium every year.

Nonetheless, the executives of Kajinomoto Stadium voiced their concerns.

"Wait a minute, our stadium can hold around 50,000 visitors, and we're expecting it to be close to full capacity. There's no way an amusement park's stadium can hold so many people."

"But the attached documents say otherwise..."

"Nonsense! I never heard of such a large park in our neighboring town! They must have fabricated this."

The executives' suspicions were understandable. But then again it was still a possibility. The manager of the soccer team raised his hand.

"Nonetheless, we'd be grateful if we are really able to use it. We should head over to take a look right away. That'll ease our suspicions. At any rate, let's contact the Maple agency..."

"...Y-You're right. Hey, get to it."

The secretary nodded and searched up the telephone number before making a dial. The secretary briefed the person on the phone about their plight and explained the contents of the contract. The room was dead silent apart from the echoes of the secretary's voice.

Shortly after that, the call ended with words of gratitude exchanged.

"I've spoken to the manager of the park."

"And?"



“We can use the stadium anytime. They are also able to accommodate our crowd...”

An hour after the phone call, 10 representatives from Kajinomoto Stadium arrived at Amagi Brilliant Park.

Because it would be unbecoming for a high schooler to show them around whilst claiming to be the manager, Seiya appointed Wrench-kun, a cast member, for the job instead.

Wrench-kun was a real cast member who was born from the mechanical realm Zora. His role in the maintenance crew was to take charge of the repairs and maintenance of the attractions and facilities in the park. Throughout the week, Seiya had ordered Wrench-kun to clean and prepare the humongous stadium for use.

As his name implied, Wrench-kun took the form of a wrench with limbs growing out. Despite that, the people from Kajinomoto Stadium took no notice of that. It must have been due to the magical charm used by the real cast members whenever they went out.

Seiya and Isuzu took the role of random receptionists and followed behind Wrench-kun. A tool-shaped figure leading a group of businessmen in suits was definitely something you didn't see every day. Although Wrench-kun had an adorable appearance, he did not smile one bit. Perhaps out of professionalism, he briefed the representatives with a straight and composed expression.

“This big entrance is split into 4 big areas. The seat allocation display should work with some minor adjustments...”

Wrench-kun explained every detail: from the seating plan, quantity of catered food, and number of toilets to the route vehicles delivering equipment and supplies should take. He also showed them around various facilities like lockers for the teams, rooms for the commentators and equipment like the display projectors, advertisement printers, lighting system, and, of course, the condition of the soccer field.

“The usage of portable antennas should provide ample reception. Also, it would be best to hire some temporary shuttle bus services because walking on foot from either of the two nearest train stations would take more than 30 minutes. This concludes the tour of the stadium.”

Wrench-kun wrapped up the tour that took slightly more than an hour.

“This definitely isn’t perfect, but still...” the general managers pondered over the matter. “...Excuse me. Then again, shouldn’t we be able to make something out of this?”

“I agree that the facilities here are sufficient. But having the players use a field they aren’t used to would certainly be messy...” said the league representative who tagged along for the visit.

Everyone voiced their concerns and hesitated in coming to a decision.

“Maybe we should discuss this back in our office. There’s no way we can decide here.”

“Very well. We appreciate your prompt response on this matter,” Wrench-kun said with an expressionless face.

The representatives from Kajinomoto Stadium expressed their gratitude before rushing back.

“Hey, kid. I don’t know much about what’s happening, but...”

After sending them off, Wrench-kun took out a cigarette from seemingly nowhere and lighted it up. His behavior would come off rather odd to anyone else, but Seiya had become desensitized to anything magical throughout these 10 days.

“...Were you anticipating this to happen?”

“I said it at the garden, didn’t I? I received a magical power from Latifa.”

“Hmph. The ability to tell the future, huh? Whatever, I’ve got some preparations to do, so I’m off.”

Wrench-kun spun around and walked away.

“Wasn’t your power to read people’s minds?” Isuzu questioned, making sure that they were alone.

“Yeah.”

“Then you shouldn’t have been able to predict this.”

“I wonder if that’s really true?”

Spewing his emotionless remark, Seiya headed towards the administrative building. In less than an hour, they received a phone call from Kajinomoto Stadium.

“We’d like to use your stadium. Let us discuss the details soon.”

\*

Muse finished her second performance of the day and was just about to have lunch at the staff canteen. As she was walking through the underpass, Tiramie came running over shouting in excitement.

“Breaking news, *mi!* Breaking news, *mi!*”

He bumped into the other cast members by accident, spinning in circles before knocking on the wall and falling over. The look on Tiramie’s face as he rubbed his head while saying “*Mi! Mi!*” gave off a mischievous impression, but it was also quite cute. Nonetheless, Muse learned of Tiramie’s hobby of sexually harassing girls during her first year in Amaburi, so she decided not to extend too warm of a greeting.

“Are you all right, Tiramie-san?”

“Thanks, Muse-chan. Actually, my stomach is hurting more than my head, can you give it a rub? Not here, a little lower...”

*Eww.*

Muse faked a choke in an attempt to conceal her disgust and continued, “So what is the breaking news?”

“Don’t just ignore me, *mi*. Anyway, breaking news, *mi*! Melody Shibasaki’s playing at the 2nd park’s stadium for the opening match!”

Muse did not have much interest in soccer, but it was still shocking to hear.

“That’s the team participating in the J league, right? Why?”

“They can’t use Kajinomoto Stadium because of a fire last night and according to some old contract, Amaburi’s stadium would be used in this case instead! In other words, we’re their pinch hitter, *mi*!”

“Right...”

*Now that I think of it, Tiramie’s a huge supporter of Melody. He must be elated to hear that they’re playing here.*

Seeing how this wasn’t ringing her bell, Tiramie snickered.

“Muse-chan, you don’t get it, *mi*. The spectators who turn up for the match need to enter the park first. And it’s the season opener, so we’ll be expecting tens of thousands of guests, *mi*!”

“Wait, then doesn’t that mean...”

“That’s right, *mi*! We might just be able to hit our target thanks to this!”

It was then, Muse recalled the word “miracle” that Seiya referred to at the sky garden.

\*

The backstage was in total chaos in the afternoon.

They were busy making reservations with the shuttle bus companies, planning out the route for the spectators, and revising the staff roster to handle the increasing demand for manpower. Furthermore, the representatives from Kajinomoto Stadium had arrived for negotiations.

It could be said that none of these tasks were easy. They had an outstanding lack of time. Nonetheless, they had to have everything ready to go within 48 hours.

The cast members onstage were performing relentlessly, while those in the backstage were running to and fro carrying out the tasks they were assigned to. The cast members worked with the other staff members to handle the small matters one at a time. When complex problems arose, Seiya would step in to issue directions, telling them to “do this”, “do that”, or to “keep this in view for follow-up measures”.

Throughout these few days, Isuzu had been assuming the role of Seiya’s secretary. And because of that, she had noticed something about him.

*Doesn’t he seem unusually mechanical today?*

It was already very close to midnight when Seiya inquired, “Wait, I almost forgot. How’s today’s visitor count?” And that was strange, as Seiya had always been worrying about the visitor count before.

“2,087 people. Not much difference from yesterday.”

“I see,” Seiya responded without shifting his focus from the legal documents he was reading. Not a single trace of emotion leaked out from his tone of voice. He was neither at peace, nor was he discouraged.



**Chapter 4: A Video on Customer Violence Was Uploaded!****Part 5**

Things became increasingly chaotic the next day.

The announcement of the match's change in venue had been broadcasted throughout many different television channels last night. There was no turning back now.

The influx of staff members created a shortage of parking lots for their vehicles, which in turn led to a traffic jam on the road. Unfortunately, they could not afford to slack off on their service amidst the mayhem that unfolded backstage. On top of that, the cast members onstage were expected to help out with the preparations in the 2nd park during their free time.

Macaron finished inflating the balloons in the entrance square and returned to the backstage, only to be greeted with another task to help the people from 'Nakamura Construction' in the stadium's B wing. And then, as he scurried over, a stranger gestured for him to come over and help him set up the booths.

"Why me..."

He carried the heavy furniture up the flight of stairs. The elevator was already operating at full capacity carrying people from one floor to another, so they were instructed to use the stairs.

"Come to think of it, wouldn't it be more comfortable if you took off that suit?"

*Oh yeah, I forgot to put on the Lala Patch. I should've worn it so that I'd be seen as an ordinary person. Sadly, I left it in the locker room. Meh, whatever.*

"It's the park's rules. Anyway, clearly there's nobody inside of me."

"Hah! Cut the crap, it's not like you're Mackey from Dejima Land..."

"Just hearing that name makes me pissed, *ron*."



Right after Macaron had brought the stuff to the booth, he noticed Tiramie carrying a roll of thick electrical wires walking by with unsteady footsteps.

*“Mi...Mi...so heavy...”*

And on the other side, Wanipi was seen pushing a trolley full of boxes stuffed with various goods for the booths.

*“Outta my way, or I’ll roll you over, pi!”*

*Things have gotten to the point where anyone, be it Wanipi who never had things to do, or lead mascots like Tiramie and I, is deployed for such work. Are things really going to be all right?*

The next one up was Moffle. Macaron had been busy the moment he entered the park, so he hadn’t seen him till now.

*“Yo.”*

*“Mofu.”*

Moffle was holding on to a writing board with some documents on it, appearing to be striking things off a checklist. He must have been inspecting and ensuring that each area had been assigned ample support staff.

*“Macaron, you’ve done enough. Go back onstage.”*

*“Give me a break...I just came here after carrying some boxes, and now you want me to go back, ron?”*

Despite Macaron’s scornful remark, Moffle did not waver one bit.

*“There’s a commotion we have to deal with, fumo. From the looks of it, things ain’t getting better ‘till the end of tomorrow,”* Moffle said as if he had already predicted tomorrow’s situation.

*“You’re surprisingly calm, ron.”*

*“You think so, fumo?”*

Because of the fire that broke out at Kajinomoto Stadium, the match would be held at Amaburi's stadium instead. If they add the number of spectators into the visitor count, the number would spike by tens of thousands in just that one night.

All the cast members harbored excitement in the face of an imminent miracle. Even Macaron was having trouble keeping his heart from beating out of his chest. However, Moffle did not appear to be having any mood of that sort. He was just duly carrying out his duties.

And that did not make sense. It was obvious, given the fact that they had worked with each other for so long.

Sensing some skepticism from Macaron, Moffle shrugged, "I guess we can save the talk for later, *fumo*. For now let's focus on the task at hand."

Saying only that, Moffle set off once again.

\*

The operations continued even after the park's closing hours.

Things had been carefully set in place, with the once-empty infirmary loaded with medicine and first aid equipment. The banners for their sponsors had also been put up in their assigned locations. Everything from lighting checks, fire drills, and visitor maps were fine-tuned numerous times and meetings with their clients and other miscellaneous operations continued throughout the night.

And so Friday came to an end with 3,573 guests having visited the park. This was slightly more than last week's count, but none of the cast members paid attention to that detail.



\*

It was Saturday, the day of the match.

Because of the intense work yesterday, all of the staff were dead tired in the morning. Each and every one of the cast members slept over at Amaburi.

Isuzu was no exception, having slept no more than 2 hours. Furthermore, being unable to take a shower for more than 12 hours had left her in a grim state.

The guests who visited the park when it opened were easily managed. The weather was perfect, and the guests who were greeted by Moffle at the entrance square smiled in excitement. One look at the plaza and one would believe the park was as lively as ever. It was hard to believe that several tens of thousands would arrive later.

It was after lunch break when things became different. A group of people wearing yellow and blue uniforms alighted the bus and entered the park. They were Melody Shibazaki's supporters. They scanned their surroundings briefly, and referred to a notice board before heading for the 2nd park.

Of course, there were people who were dissatisfied at the sudden change in venue, but one of them said he was just glad that the match wasn't cancelled.

As Isuzu was standing by at the gates, Muse came over and said, "They're here."

"More of them are coming. In fact, we'd be in trouble if there weren't."

An increasing number of spectators were flowing in at a rapid pace. After crossing the gates, they followed the map and walked towards the 2nd park.

Their numbers increased from tens, to hundreds—to thousands.

The shuttle buses that picked up the spectators from various meeting venues came streaming in. Supporters wearing colorful T-shirts alighted and split up according to their teams before entering the park. There were also buses that carried spectators who turned up at Kajinomoto Stadium without knowing about the change in venue. The operation was carried out smoothly despite the large distance.

"Amazing..."

The staff members who took charge of crowd control suppressed the disorder for the security team to conduct their inspections. The gate was now roaring with activity, a huge contrast compared to that morning where even bird chirps could be heard.

Muse was utterly taken aback.

“I’ve only seen such a huge crowd gathered like this in Ariake.”

“I don’t know about this Ariake thing you speak of, but you’re right. I’d say it’s been more than 20 years since we’ve had a crowd as big as this.”

The counter at the gate spun like defunct machinery.

There was also a large number of spectators who took the opportunity to visit the attractions before the match officially began. The mascots worked like crazy to please the humongous crowd of unimaginable numbers. Because of the 30 yen campaign, the refreshments depleted rapidly, and they had to borrow from tomorrow’s reserve stockpile.

Guests came pouring in relentlessly and the attractions had to operate non-stop to cater to the demand. The sickbay used to hold guests who felt sick was reaching its maximum capacity, whereas the number of complaints skyrocketed and the staff struggled to address their problems.

Isuzu could also be seen running all over the place. She had thought of taking a shower when she had the chance, but the guests weren’t that generous. She was on the verge of breaking down—but she assured herself that she would get over this turmoil.

The brass band marched about while conducting their performances.

Muse and gang danced and received applause.

Macaron was being kicked by the young kids.

Tiramie was scanning the surroundings for chicks.

Wanipi ran away and sought refuge in a corner.

The other cast members were all busy with their tasks.

The staff were so busy dealing with matters onstage that they could not find time to check on the people at the stadium.

Eventually the number of people wearing their supporting team shirts dwindled, signaling that they were drawing near to the start of the match. The sun began to set down west, and the night crept up from the east. Roars of joy, cheers, clapping, and feet stomping could be heard from the 2nd park. The forest and stadium that had drowned in inactivity for the past 20 years had come back afloat, livelier than ever.

*Looks like the match started without any problems.*

Isuzu stood from a distance and gazed at the stadium that had finally come back to life. She was overwhelmed by indescribable emotions. Perhaps it could have been a sense of isolation or loneliness, but it was certainly beyond mere feelings of relief and happiness. An apt analogy would probably be like a child watching other children playing among themselves from far away.

“The people down there didn’t come for the park, *fumo*.”

It appeared that Moffle had come over without her noticing. He was busy manning his Sweet House the whole day and had not appeared until now. Just like Isuzu, Moffle stared into the distance towards the stadium.

“If this were a live concert, we’d only be considered the curtain-raiser, *fumo*. Nothing has changed...not a single bit...”

Before they knew it, the other cast members had also appeared. Having finished their job, they gazed at the stadium without saying a word. Traces of loneliness like what Isuzu had experienced could be seen in their eyes.

**Chapter 4: A Video on Customer Violence Was Uploaded!****Part 6**

The match ended in a tie of 2-2. People were saying that it was a spectacular match.

The spectators left the venue in satisfaction before the park finally closed. By the time they cleared up the stadium, it was already past midnight.

Although everyone was tired, a large proportion of the cast members had not returned. That was to be expected—there was no way they could sleep without knowing the visitor count. The staff canteen had been converted to a temporary meeting venue. All of the cast members gathered there, including Latifa.

After a brief moment of tense atmosphere, Seiya entered the canteen.

“We’ve got the results.”

With that said, he glanced at his memo where he wrote the visitor count.

“53,449 visitors. In other words, we just need another 5,688 visitors on Sunday and we’re set. Chance of rain for tomorrow: 0%. Extrapolating data from the past week...we’ve pretty much succeeded.”

The group remained silent even after they heard that. They were probably still in the middle of processing what they’d just heard.

“What’s wrong? I just confirmed that your park’s going to remain afloat, you know?”

It was only a few seconds later when all the cast members stood up and cheered in delight.

“We did it! We did it!”

Muse and Latifa held hands and jumped about, seemingly in tears.



“It’s a miracle, *ron*! A miracle has occurred, *ron*!”

Macaron began crying out manly tears.

“Now I don’t have to bid farewell to my babes, *mi*!” Tiramie shouted while typing furiously on his smartphone.

“Kanie-san! You have my utmost respect! My tears go out to you!”

Tricen had his head down and was crying in relief.

Wanipi was looking up at the sky weeping and Wrench-kun patted his back and comforted him. The other cast members were all losing their sense of control, banging the chairs, clapping their hands, jumping on the tables, and even doing backflips.

“By the way, to be more specific about today’s visitor count, 43,217 of these visitors were spectators, meaning you guys had 10,231 legitimate guests. It might seem mediocre in comparison, but we hit the 10,000 milestone. I’d say this is a huge achievement for a pathetic theme park like this.”

The canteen was filled with applause and cheers once again.



Perhaps out of euphoria, the cast members offered to toss Seiya into the air, but Seiya declined and said, “Come on, that’s enough. Everyone’s dismissed! We still have one more day to go, so go back and rest!”

Before leaving the canteen, Seiya went over to Latifa. She was holding on to Isuzu’s hand for support and gave a pleasant smile.

“Kanie-sama, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

“You flatter me. It was really just a coincidence.”

“No, this is definitely—”

“A miracle? I guess you could put it that way.”

What he just said came out rather rude, and Seiya regretted it right away. For a brief moment there, Latifa’s smile disappeared.

And as if she just noticed something, a hint of sadness spread throughout her expression before returning to a smile.

“Yes, you’re right.”

“I’m exhausted, so I’ll be on my way.”

“All right. Thank you for all you’ve done.”

Seiya’s and Isuzu’s eyes met. She appeared to have something to say, but there was no need to talk about it now.

“Hey, go back and get some some rest, you hear me!?” he shouted at the cast members and left the canteen that was still bustling with activity.

As he walked down the dark alley, he saw Moffle leaning against the wall with a gloomy expression.

“So it’s finally over, *fumo*.”

“Yeah. The rest is all up to you guys. Do whatever you want.”

“We owe you one.”

“Don’t mention it.”

Throughout these two days, the two of them could not set their minds at ease. They simply weren’t in the mood to dance around and praise the heavens for the miracle that occurred. And the two of them were currently meeting up to check on each other in a dim alley with nobody around. If they got spotted by anyone, they’d certainly discover the truth—

That what had just happened was no miracle. Seiya recalled the event 3 days ago.

\*

No matter what strategy he used, there was no way they could have reached the goal in time.

Seiya had arrived at that conclusion the morning after he accepted the task. Anything he tried would have been pointless. Even if he had made everything free and posted advertisements throughout the country, the number of visitors would still be insufficient. It was virtually impossible to attract such a huge number of visitors in such a short span of time.

They might be able to put up a good fight, but that was it. He might have to use some form of magic to be able to achieve such a feat. After all, he had considered all options available to him, but could not find a way. Seiya was on the verge of giving up.

Yet when he had found the stadium while exploring the 2nd park with Muse, an idea struck him. The stadium was the remnant of the bubble economy; a huge monument from the park's glory days. He had no idea what the previous managers were thinking back then, but he sensed that something was amiss about the fact that this stadium was preserved until today.

And so he checked on the past records when he got back to the office and discovered an old contract signed between the Amaburi and Kajinomoto Stadium. There was a line of text in the contract that was easy to miss without thorough examination.

(In the event that Kajinomoto Stadium was unable to be used, Amagi Brilliant Park's stadium will be used instead.)

*What month is it?*

March.

*What event is Kajinomoto Stadium planning?*

The J League's opening match.

It was the highly anticipated face-off between the first-time competitor Melody Shibazaki and previous champion Kurawa Metz. That match itself should get at least 40,000 spectators. There was no other way of saving the park apart from getting hold of this chance.

And so Seiya had ordered Wrench-kun and his crew to maintain and clean the place up. He even turned a deaf ear to all of their complaints, for he secretly knew that it could potentially be the game changer.

The only thing left was to make Kajinomoto Stadium 'unusable'. And of course, the fire that broke out was not out of coincidence. For a whole week, Seiya had been having an internal conflict over whether or not to do it. He only came to a decision during the conversation with Latifa when she was making the croquettes in her kitchen.

On Wednesday night, after Seiya returned home from work, he packed his rucksack and headed out towards Kajinomoto Stadium. He had carved a detailed layout of the stadium into his memory long beforehand and his route of intrusion had been fine-tuned and rehearsed from a week back. Most of the equipment and rooms should have been locked up, but Seiya knew they were all pickable with the lock-picking tool he'd brought with him.

All he had to do was rewire the electrical circuit and a spark would eventually start a fire by itself. He had to wager on the fact that it would be enough to deceive the professional investigators after the incident.

Another problem was that in order to get into the stadium, he'd have to walk a 50-meter-long tightrope over their 8-meter-tall fence. To do that, he would have to overcome his acrophobia. It was late at night and nobody was in sight. It took a whole hour for Seiya to muster the courage to walk across it. That was probably the longest hour of Seiya's life.

When he finally got across after clinging desperately to dear life, he arrived at the door of the electric control room. It was then that Moffle called out to him from behind.

(Looks like you've got quite some trouble in your hands, *fumo*.)

Seiya considered himself lucky to be too frightened to scream.

(Why are you here? What are you trying to do and how did you even...)

In response to Seiya's whisper-shouts, Moffle pointed his paws at him.

(I followed you here, *fumo*. I was once a member of the Recon-Assault Forces in Maple Land, so this is nothing to me, *fumo*.)

(Another one of your stories, huh...)

Did such a unit even exist?

(Wrench-kun told me that you've secretly ordered a clean-up and maintenance of the 2nd park's stadium, *fumo*. It was only then I recalled the details of the old contract, *fumo*. But to think that you'd actually be so stupid...)

(Say whatever you want.)

He whipped out his lock-picking tool from his rucksack and began working on the door to the control room. He had practiced picking cylinder padlocks for several days in preparation for this. He was only a few clicks away from opening the lock.

(Stop it. What you're doing is against the law, *fumo*.)

(I know.)

(Not just the stadium, but many organizations will be involved. There might even be casualties. You're committing an unforgivable sin, *fumo*.)

(I know.)

He stopped for a moment and snickered, (Are you really going to resort to such cunning means to save the park? There's no way we'd be happy with this. I'd rather become homeless than benefit from something like this, *fumo*...!)

(Then what's gonna happen to *her*...!?), Seiya asked as he grabbed on to Moffle's bowtie.

Moffle was somewhat shocked at Seiya's menacing aura.

(If it were just the closure of a lame theme park, I wouldn't even bat an eye in sympathy. But I heard that she won't be able to live on if this park closes. And yes,



I've pondered over this too many times, yet there's no other way. There's no other way, you hear me!?)

(*Mofu...*)

(All you could say was "stop". Is there anything else to add? You treasure her, don't you? What were you doing before following me? Polishing your skills? Hard at work entertaining our guests? Those are useless, I tell you. Those are all useless...!)

Both parties were equally in pain. Seiya eventually loosened his grip and took a step back, avoiding eye contact.

(I'm going to have to use underhanded tactics here.)

Having said that conclusive statement, Seiya proceeded with the lock picking.

(I'm doing this out of my own free will, and not under the request of anybody.)

(Why would you go that far for her, *fumo...*)

(...Because I finally remembered.)

Seiya had visited Amagi Brilliant Park more than a decade ago.

He was about 5 or 6 years old when he came with his parents whom he was still fond of back then. He visited each attraction and thoroughly enjoyed every single one of them. He did not have any memory of Moffle, but there was one particular cast member who Seiya did have a vivid recollection of.

And that person was Latifa. She looked like a 14 to 15 year old girl, just like the present.

While playing around, Seiya split up with his parents and somehow ended up backstage. There, he stumbled upon the sky garden and found her sitting in a corner crying. He remembered asking why she was crying, though he could no longer recall her answer. It was probably something along the lines of some curse and loneliness.

Seiya remembered performing a dance he had just memorized to cheer her up, and reassured her.

*I'll always be by your side. Someday, I'll definitely save you—*

(I once met Latifa many years ago.), Seiya continued while picking the lock.

(That was when I was really small. For some reason Latifa looked exactly like she is right now, but anyway, I definitely met her back then. And there, I promised that I'd definitely save her.)

(I see, *fumo*...), Moffle muttered.

(If memory serves, there was indeed a case of a young boy wandering into the sky garden by accident, *fumo*. We've stepped up our security since then...)

(So that means I wasn't mistaken, huh?)

*Just a little longer and this lock will be busted.*

He flicked the pick several times and tugged. The lock gave a click and opened.

(...Okay.)

He put the lock pick back in his rucksack and pulled out a flashlight and some wires. The electric circuit board in this room should have been an old model. All he needed to do was get in and rewire it—

And just as he was about to enter the room, Moffle punched Seiya in the back, knocking him to the floor.

(Kanie Seiya. I can't allow you to do this, *fumo*.)

(Tch...)

*Stupid fleabag. So you plan to abandon Latifa and let the park die?*

Seiya wanted to shout those words, but nothing came out. His limbs were numb and he could not move at will.

(Let me tell you something, *fumo*. The curse on Latifa isn't just one that weakens her, but something far worse, *fumo*.)

*Something far worse? Just what could possibly—*

(It's a curse that also resets her growth and memories every year, *fumo*. That girl has been living as a 14-year-old child for more than 10 years. She loses her memories accumulated throughout the year at the start of spring each year. So all your hard work in helping her would just be forgotten when the time comes, *fumo*.)

(Wha...)

*So that was the reason why she looks exactly the same like she was back then.*

Moffle sighed, (Even if the park closes for good, I intended to take Latifa out to the streets and live a simple life. I don't know how long we can last out there, but if it comes down to it, it'll be all up to fate to decide, *fumo*.)

(...)

(But I've changed my mind. I don't mind resigning to fate...but I might as well get my hands dirty too. Just now...you asked back then if I had anything else to bring to the table, *fumo*. And you're right. There's something that I...no, we have to do, *fumo*.)

Moffle picked up Seiya's flashlight and tools from the floor.

(Kanie Seiya, you shouldn't be the only one doing the work for both of us, *fumo*. Since we really have to resort to underhanded tactics after all, I'll be the one to do it.)

Moffle entered the control room. The actual task wasn't difficult per se. He just had to connect the wires in the crossed out area and overload the circuit. The rubber coating of the wires started to glow and heat up. Sparks began to fly and a foul burning smell came from the room.

(Time to go, *fumo*.)

Picking up Seiya, who was still unable to move, Moffle fled with remarkable agility.

\*

Despite telling the cast members to go home, most of them remained in the canteen and created havoc inside.

Though thanks to that, nobody had noticed that the two culprits, Seiya and Moffle, were rendezvousing in the dark alley.

“I’d never thought I’d do such dirty things, *fumo*. Even *I* am afraid of myself.”

“I get what you mean.”

“Then again, we didn’t have a choice, *fumo*. I’m going to have to step up my game from now on,” Moffle shrugged his guilt away.

“Anyway, I take it that this concludes your stint here, *fumo*?”

He was probably referring to Seiya’s job as an acting manager. Seiya had done whatever he could, and chances were that they would succeed without his supervision tomorrow. His job was essentially complete.

“Yeah. I can finally start clearing my backlog of games when I get home. Wait, actually...I might as well see this to the very end.”

“Indeed. I’m sure the cast members would like to see you for the very last time too, *fumo*.”

Seiya revealed a bitter smile.

“I’ll be leaving, then.”

“*Mofu*. Thank you, Seiya.”

And as they waved with backs facing each other, Moffle and Seiya parted ways.

Daily visitor count: 53,449

Visitors needed: 5,688

1 day remaining



**Chapter 4: A Video on Customer Violence Was Uploaded!****Part 7**

Seiya slept all the way till afternoon the next day.

After having some pasta with Aisu, who had woken up unusually early, Seiya gazed at the golf show on TV. He'd considered playing some PC games, but he simply wasn't in the mood.

A clear sky expanded far into the horizons in his town, bringing warmth to an otherwise chilly season.

Seiya prepared to head out just when the evening anime came on. Aisu bit into a rice cracker and asked, "Where are you going at this time of day?"

"Heading to work."

"Right..."

He wasn't sure if he could make it for the final bus today, so he brought out his bicycle instead. The ride wouldn't take longer than 30 minutes, anyway.

He reached the staff entrance and greeted the usual security guard on duty.

"How's it going?"

"Better than expected. We might have actually gotten more guests than yesterday."

Seiya was utterly dumbfounded. He'd always had the feeling that the numbers should have decreased from yesterday. He walked into the backstage and waved at the cast members laughing happily at the end of their shift.

The 2 weeks Seiya spent here had been pretty crazy. The cast members who had once resented his guts now responded in a gleeful manner.

Seiya felt like he'd found a place where he belonged, something that had never happened to him at school.

The park closed for the day soon after. A total of 12,430 guests had visited the park today. They managed to attract 10,000 guests for the second consecutive day. After hearing the announcement from the speakers, everyone clapped their hands in celebration.

Seiya shook hands with a cast member who happened to be beside him and thanked her for the hard work. And so, Seiya's job was complete.

As he walked through the underground passage, a clapping sound coming from behind resonated throughout the stretch.

"My, my. What an amazing feat."

Seiya turned around, only to be greeted by Kurisu Takaya from Amagi Development. Chances were that he came all the way from his office just to confirm the total visitor count of the park. He took out the visitor's pass that was hanging on his neck.

"I never thought they'd actually succeed in getting 100,000 visitors."

"...Neither did I. They must have worked their asses off to accomplish that, huh?"

"Not that again," Kurisu sneered. "Perhaps you should drop the act; isn't this all because *you* worked you ass off? Acting Manager Kanie Seiya-kun, or I should say, the Oracle's chosen one."

"...!"

He tried his best to conceal his shock, but of course he couldn't. Kurisu should have known that he was the acting manager of the park, for the chances that there were spies among the cast was rather high. But he'd never expected him to know anything about the Oracle—

Kurisu continued after savoring Seiya's reaction, "But that just means the park's lifespan is extended by another year."



I doubt you can sustain that hardcore campaign of yours any longer. In the end, this is nothing more than a resuscitation to a dying patient.”

“...So what are you trying to say?”

“It’s only a matter of time before this park suffers its fate. And your beloved and cursed princess shall meet her eventual demise.”

*This guy knows about her curse!? Just who is this Takaya Kurisu!?*

“Just who the heck are you?”

Seiya considered using his magic to read his mind, but now was not the time. And with every ounce of discipline, he suppressed the urge to activate his power.

“Aren’t you gonna use your magical power? That’s some serious self-control you’ve got there, kid.”

Seiya controlled his agitation and stopped himself from screaming out.

*So he knows about my powers as well...!*

“Hah! I’m sure you’re aware of her fate, given that you know about her curse. It is said that the evil magician was chased away by the heroic knights and pushed down a cliff, but nobody said he died as a result.”

Kurisu’s cunning snicker reeked of malicious intent.

“...To be honest, I actually wanted to settle this once and for all this year, but I’ve changed my mind. I guess I’ll keep your acts in the soccer field under cover and see just how this useless amusement park will fare for the next year.”

“Don’t screw with me! That girl has done nothing wrong, and yet you’re—” Seiya voiced his anger out without any further restraint.

Hearing that, Kurisu’s expression became blank and mysterious.

“Then why don’t you continue your job?”

The atmosphere inside the tunnel warped, and the lights in the ceiling became increasingly brighter.

“This place shall suffer a slow and painful defeat. They can struggle all they want, but this Argel you so dearly protect is fated to crumble. We will not stop until we see that in our eyes,” a deep voice reverberated. The man in front of him was certainly no businessman. The enigma of his grim laughter definitely suggested otherwise.

“Kanie-kun, get down.”

“Sento?”

Isuzu appeared from behind, pushing Seiya aside and pointing her musket.

She fired a shot.

But with the blinding flare of gunpowder, Kurisu Takaya vanished into thin air.

“Ugh...”

With his mind still in a mess, Seiya turned and scanned his surroundings. There was nobody apart from Isuzu in sight. Isuzu withdrew her musket but remained on high alert.

“...He ran away.”

“What was up with that?”

“No idea, but at the very least we know he’s no ordinary human.”

Soon after, perhaps after receiving news from Isuzu, Moffle came running to the scene only to realize he was late. He searched the area and flipped a nearby trash bin in anger.

“So that bastard came back, *fumo*!? I’ll definitely get him next time!”

\*

Seiya made his way to Latifa’s sky garden shortly after the incident.

"I'm continuing."

Latifa tilted her head, seemingly puzzled at his statement.

"...What do you mean?"

"I'll continue being the manager of this park for another year. Well, I figured I could stick around until your problems are solved."

Latifa must have realized that he was referring to the curse she was struck by.

"Kanie-sama..."

"Don't worry about it. I promised you back then, didn't I?"

"You...made a promise?"

"Indeed. Hopefully you'll remember it one day."

Saying that, Seiya gave her a sorrowful smile.

Daily visitor count: 12,430

Visitor count exceeded by: 6,742

GOAL FULFILLED



### Epilogue

It was the 1st of April, marking the beginning of a new fiscal year in spring.

The morning before the park's opening, Seiya announced the new year's plans for Amaburi and gave instructions to the various department heads on the development of the park. After that, Seiya headed for the sky garden.

Latifa was waiting there, as always. Actually, 'as always' wasn't exactly very precise, since it could be said that this was her 'first time' meeting him.

"Pleased to meet you. Umm, Kanie...Seiya-sama."

"Pleased to meet you too," Seiya forced a reply with a bitter smile.

"I've heard a lot about you, about the fact that you saved our park from its apparent despair."

Latifa had since forgotten about everything that had happened throughout the past year. Everything from the 2 weeks Seiya spent here, about him being the Oracle's chosen one, to the promise he made to Latifa many years back. Her memories had been completely reset.

While Latifa's attitude towards him did not become exceedingly distant, Seiya could still feel traces of restraint in her speech.

"I wouldn't call myself a savior, though. I merely did what I could, and I hope to do so by your side for the coming year," said Seiya. He could feel traces of sadness leaking out with every word he spoke.

"And so do I."



Putting the sky garden behind him, Seiya moved on to the administration building where he noticed a commotion going on between several cast members in the office of public relations. Isuzu, Moffle, Macaron, and Tiramie were in room with a seemingly foul mood on their faces.

“Oh hey, Kanie-kun. We’re just talking about the cast’s profile page that’s to be put up on the park’s official site.”

“What about it?”

“We’re having some issues with it, such as Moffle’s favorite food...he has never once told me about croquettes being one of them.”

Moffle snorted, “But that’s the truth, *fumo*. Croquettes are the best. I’m recently digging those sold in the Saigoutei’s at Komazawa and Nakano.”

“But you’re the fairy of sweets. Besides, some popular manga out there already features a character who likes croquettes. It’ll just mask your presence.”

“Hmph...then let’s go with dorayaki, *fumo*.”

“That won’t do either. Everybody in Japan knows the character who loves dorayaki more than any other.”

“Tch...”

“And Tiramie too. There’s no way your ‘biggest weakness’ can be mice. You’re also going to get overshadowed by the same character I just talked about!”

“B-But that’s true, *mi*! I just suffered a trauma after seeing a rat as huge as a cat at the bar in Shimokitazawa, *mi*!”

Just recalling the incident caused Tiramie’s fur to stand on end. And Moffle, who stood beside him, gazed over with a menacing smile.

“Even then, we can’t go with mice. We’ll change it to something else.”

“Ugh...”



“Also, Macaron. Are you joking with me? Gunpla building as a talent!?”

Macaron stood up in rage.

“H-Hey! I wasn’t joking when I wrote that! I can build a master grade Gundam without looking at the instructions, *ron*! I even have an autograph by Ebikawa Kanetake!”

“Again, there’s already a famous character with a similar skill. It masks your presence. Think of a better one.”

“How can that be...”

Seiya had gotten a good grasp of the situation as a bystander. The fact that Isuzu was the one holding the reigns set his mind at peace. But the 3 of them voiced their displeasure together.

“That’s mean, *mi*! You just keep going on about masking this, masking that!”

“Yeah, this is our true profile, *fumo*.”

“Speaking of which, then what about Isuzu’s weapon, *ron*?”

“Eh...?”

Upon hearing that, Isuzu became stunned.

“That’s right, *mi*! Isuzu’s musket!”

“*Mofu*. You mean *that*? Certainly were big hits, huh? Those mahou shoujo anime...”

“Yeah, yeah! That show was gold! I even got all the Blu-rays, *ron*.”

And together, the three of them said in unison, “IT MASKS YOUR PRESENCE!”

“...Ugh.”

Seeing Isuzu trembling in anger, the three mascots continued.

“I guess for our case we’re able to just fake a story, but Isuzu’s musket is gonna be hard to hide, *fumo...*”

“Visual deception, huh? I can imagine this being a pain in the neck, *ron.*”

“How sad, *mi*. Just like how an unpopular gravure idol cosplays to gain attention, *mi!*”

“Hey Sento, calm yourself. And you three, cut the crap.”

With tears of embarrassment welling from the side of her eyelids, Isuzu brought out the musket in question.

“If that’s the case, I just have to mask their presence with gunpowder!”

“Hey, sto—!”

A loud gunshot rent the air.

Macaron was the first to bite the bullet with ‘Pain Bringer’. Moffle and Tiramie watched him faint in astonishment and tried to make a run for it. Seeing that, Isuzu fired another bullet at them. Poor Tricen, who was merely passing by, ended up becoming the next sacrifice, and Tiramie jumped behind Seiya in hopes of using him as a shield. Not having any of that, Isuzu took aim, and—

*I knew it. I should’ve just left this goddamned place after finishing my task...I’m gonna have to spend another year here? Don’t fuck with me...*

Collapsing on the floor after falling prey to yet another one of Amaburi’s “attractions”, Seiya immediately started to regret his decision.

-The end-

Project Leader and Translator : Sora

Supervisor : Default Melody

Editor : ramenpoodle

Graphics : Aries, Daze

Image Typesetting : Castor212

PDF/EPUB Typesetting : DevilHands

Translation Group : *NanoDesu Translations*